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THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH





THE AGE OF  
WORDSWORTH

BY  
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TO MY STUDENTS  
PAST AND PRESENT



## PREFACE.

By the 'Age of Wordsworth' will be understood, for the purpose of the present volume, the period from 1798 to 1830,—from the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* to the first appearance of Tennyson. Both dates correspond to well-defined turning points of literary history; the great careers which belong to the period at all mostly begin and end, *as* careers, within it, and conflicting claims for their possession have not caused serious debate. In a few cases, indeed, I fear I have unfairly solved the question by Solomon's method of bisection—laying hands without ceremony upon that portion of Keble or of Carlyle that was mine, and leaving the untouched remnant to the historian of the following period. In all such cases, however, their entire omission would have left a palpable hiatus in my work. The task of presenting this vast and complex literature with some semblance of order and unity has been no light one. If I have in any degree succeeded in that aim, it is by availing myself of the fact, hardly, I think, deniable by any student of the period, that almost everything of importance in its literature stood in some relation to the far-reaching and many-sided revival of imaginative power commonly known as Romanticism,—a relation often of antagonism or disdain, of imperfect sympathy or half-hearted recoil, but still a relation. Romanticism is thus the organizing conception of the present volume. The introduction attempts to give

a short view of the various phases of the Romantic movement in Europe. To any reader who finds it abstruse, I would plead in answer that no account of Romanticism and all that it involves can possibly be elementary. Then, in successive chapters, the evolution of Romantic or quasi-Romantic impulses is followed through the several spheres of literature, from the rudimentary hints of them discernible in scientific or political speculation to their assured dominance in criticism and the novel, and their all but exclusive sway in poetry.

In dealing with the single lives I have tried to observe what, in my view, should be the normal distinction between literary history and biography. To the literary historian, as such, the facts of a man's life are of primary concern only in so far as they serve to explain his work. Hence many events which loom large in the general conception of, say, Coleridge or Shelley, and properly occupy much space in the admirable critical biographies which abound for this period, are here on principle ignored. On the other hand, I have everywhere striven to bring out the literary bearing of whatever biographical detail I admitted at all. To the large biographical and critical literature of the period I am, it is needless to say, much indebted. I would refer especially, among living men, to the writings of Dr. Garnett, Mr. Stopford Brooke, Mr. F. W. Myers, Professors Brandl, Colvin, Dowden, Hales, Raleigh and Vaughan. Professor Saintsbury's excellent *History of Nineteenth Century Literature*—the only competent English book on its subject—has furnished an occasional suggestion; the French and German historians of the Romantic period—especially Haym, Julian Schmidt, and MM. Lanson, Pellissier and Brunetière—have had some influence on my treatment; and Georg Brandes' brilliant if perverse handling of the English 'Naturalisten' has not been ignored. Professor Legouis'

striking book on Wordsworth led me to amplify my account of his 'crisis.' I have, further, to acknowledge the helpful criticism of four friends who have read the proofs, Miss Julia Wedgwood and Professors Hales, Raleigh and Vaughan. Miss Wedgwood, in particular, has given me in unstinted measure the benefit of her wide and intimate knowledge of this period, and of her ripe literary judgment. I am likewise indebted to Professor Vaughan for the privilege of reading a subtle and suggestive study of Coleridge, which I regret should still remain in manuscript. Finally, I would acknowledge the editorial kindness—known to all who have been associated with Professor Hales—which has permitted me to follow a plan differing considerably from that of the previous volumes in this series; and also the forbearance which the publishers have shown me during the execution of a task prolonged far beyond the date originally assigned.

C. H. H.

ABERYSTWYTH,

*December, 1892.*

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

IN the present edition a few discrepancies have been removed, and such errors in matters of fact as have come to my knowledge corrected. Otherwise the book is unchanged.

C. H. H.

ABERYSTWYTH,

*October, 1897*





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## INTRODUCTION

No title can adequately label a period so immensely rich in achievement as the first thirty years of the present century. Wellington and Wilberforce, Malthus and Bentham, the union with Ireland, the industrial revolution, had as large a share as Wordsworth or Shelley in determining what England now thinks and feels. But 'by nothing is England so great as by her poetry'; and the chief of all the claims of the age to remembrance is, that it witnessed the extraordinary development of poetic genius, known generally as the Revival of Romance, in which Wordsworth was, on the whole, the most original and commanding figure. More speaking titles have been proposed, but they denote special phases of Romanticism too precisely to serve, without laborious interpretation, as descriptions of the whole. The old familiar term, 'The Return to Nature,' is now somewhat unduly discredited; but in its ordinary sense it applies too exclusively to those elements in Romanticism which were akin to Rousseau. Mr. Theodore Watts's finely chosen phrase, 'The Renascence of Wonder,' expresses with great delicacy that vein of Romantic poetry, from Chatterton and Blake to Coleridge and Keats, which has most affinity to his own school, but does not very aptly denote Scott's hearty and joyous familiarity with his Romantic world. And the term *lyrisme*, by which the French agree to define their own *Romantisme*, cannot be accepted as altogether adequate to

the more scattered and heterogeneous Romanticism of England and Germany.

What, then, was Romanticism? Primarily, as we have hinted, it was an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. At countless points the universe of sense and thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to, and mingling with his richest and intensest life. Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of Attic marble,—all these springs of the poet's inspiration and the artist's joy began to flow, not at once but in prolonged unordered succession; and not within a limited area, but throughout Western Europe, and pre-eminently in Germany, England, and France.

The word Romance, hackneyed and vulgarized as it is, expresses less inadequately than any other the kind of charm which these heterogeneous sources of poetry exercised in common. They were all, to begin with, *strange*; ways of escape from the pressure of the ordinary, modes of deliverance from the dead weight of routine. But the romance of which poetry is begotten can never be merely strange. It has a subtler fascination, which rests partly upon wonder, but partly also upon recognition. For its peculiar quality lies in this, that in apparently detaching us from the real world, it seems to restore us to reality at a higher point,—to emancipate us from the 'prison of the actual,' by giving us spiritual rights in a universe of the mind, exempt from the limitations of matter, and time, and space, but appealing at countless points to the instinct for that which endures and subsists. To rekindle the soul of the past, or to reveal a soul where no eye had yet discerned it; to call up Helen or Isolde, or to invest lake and mountain with 'the light that never was on sea or land;'

to make the natural appear supernatural, as Wordsworth and Coleridge put it, or the supernatural natural,—were but different avenues to the world of Romance. How was this world, thus disclosed by imagination, related to the world of the senses, the world of ‘common-sense,’ in which the mass of men contentedly moved? The current philosophy of the eighteenth century made short work of such questions. It reduced reality, in the last resort, to sense-impressions, and the ‘ideas’ which reflected them. But the Romantic spirit, ardent, full of the zest of discovery, and striving to grasp the height and the depth of the new earth and new heaven which had swum into its ken, could tolerate no such answer. In every direction current beliefs and current institutions forced the Romantics to formulate their own ideals, with results which told sometimes for revolt and sometimes for reaction, sometimes for fierce intervention in affairs, sometimes for quiescent or scornful seclusion from them, but never, even in a Scott or a Keats, permitted complete unconcern.

Hence Romanticism, beyond all other literary movements, is impregnated with speculative elements; its poets are teachers and prophets, ardent reformers, philosophic reactionaries, innovators in religion, or in criticism, or in history ‘*Le romantisme*,’ as M. Lanson says, ‘*(et c’est là sa grandeur) est tout traversé de frissons métaphysiques* ;’ and metaphysic, on its part, was penetrated with the instincts of Romanticism. ‘Poetry is philosophy, and philosophy is poetry,’ said Julius Hare, defending Wordsworth; and the aphorism had never before been so plausible. With the set ‘didactic poem’ Romanticism admitted no truce; but its profoundest creative poetry was instinct with implicit ‘criticism of life;’ and any coherent account of Romantic art must be to a great degree strung upon a history of Romantic ideas.

Two great movements of European thought stood in an intimate but complex intellectual relation to Romanticism:—the revolutionary naturalism of Rousseau, and the transcendental movement of Germany from Kant to Hegel. Rousseau has been called the ‘father of Romanticism’; and there is hardly an element in it which did not receive from Hegel its final appreciation. Chronologically, the emergence of Rousseau (1749) and the death of Hegel (1831) are two terms between which the entire evolution of Romanticism, up to its new birth in France, lies; and on the intellectual side it may be regarded as a process—partly of development, partly of elimination—which the potent but ill-organized conceptions of the Frenchman underwent in the *milieu* created by the ideas to which the German gave their most organic expression.

A true Romantic in temperament, Rousseau drove two convictions home in the generation from which the first Romantic poetry emerged: the worth and dignity of man as man, and the power of natural scenery to respond to his needs. *Emile* made an epoch in education by its persuasive picture of a mind arriving by itself—in a judiciously arranged environment—at all that it needs to know. The *Social Contract* was an attempt to construct politics on the basis of the principle that every man has equal and inalienable rights. And beneath the moral apologues and the morbid impurities of the *New Héloïse*, there glowed, for the first time in the literature of that century, a vision of the revealing power of love.

All these notes of Rousseau’s Humanism were carried on with increased richness and subtlety in Romantic poetry. Childhood is idealized by Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, freedom and passion inspire the heroes and the heroines of

Shelley. And all three took up and developed, with finer insight, those harmonies between man and external nature which Rousseau had been the first vividly to perceive. The character of this development will be considered at a later point.

But Rousseau perceived very imperfectly the harmonies between man and man. He drew, indeed, idyllic pictures of the family, and gave more honour in his great romance to the 'naturalness' of wedded life than to that of illicit passion. But any larger community than the family lay, for him, outside the pale of nature; it was either a perversion of the natural freedom and equality of man, like the historical state, or else, like his own ideal state, an aggregate artificially soldered together by a contract. As he was unconscious of any organic cohesion in the State, so he was unconscious of any organic nexus in history; and this bias told disastrously upon the whole revolutionary school which took him for its prophet. Finally, the religious faith, declared with imperishable eloquence by his Savoyan Vicar, is but a sublime deism; mingling, as has been well said, the sentiment of nature, in a very original way, with the religious sentiment, but yet never emerging from the mechanical conception of God as the artificer of the world.

Now it was the special achievement of Romanticism to overcome all these three limitations. Not, however, by a mere return to that easy complacency of the eighteenth century in its finished civilization from which Rousseau revolted, but by an advance to points of view which reconciled both Civilization and Nature as elements in a single ideal. This was no uniform or equable process. Germany, England, and France effected it each in its own way, and in each country Romanticism was of many shades, according to the degree and nature of the trans-

mutation which Rousseau's individualism underwent in it.

The causes of this change are exceedingly complex. Its character may be described, in terms which Organic modes of thinking. at the same time indicate one of the most potent of these causes, as the gradual prevalence of conceptions derived from organic life over those derived from mechanics. In other words, the fundamental presumption about the nature of things, upon which the current reflection of an age is always based, began to be derived, not from aggregates of mutually attracted atoms, but from totalities of parts each involved in and involving the whole, and sharing in a continuous evolution towards an implicit end.

Romantic idealism. The first great thinker whose speculation was penetrated with organic ideas was Kant. His fundamental achievement was to demonstrate that experience is not, as Hume thought he had shown, a stream of isolated sensations, but a totality, united by self-consciousness, and formally determined by the nature of the thinking subject. But Kant's system contained the germs of divergent lines of thought; in the next generation their divergence became distinct, and was clearly mirrored in German Romanticism. On the one hand, widely differing from Rousseau as he did, Kant laid the foundations of an individualism intrepid beyond Rousseau's wildest dreams. The lowest human consciousness constitutes what for it is real, by the very conditions of its being conscious at all; and in the absolute moral law (the categorical imperative) which peals within his breast, the most degraded or enslaved of men has the means of attaining the true 'freedom' of those who are emancipated from their own baser nature. In the hands of Kant's successors, the traces of the traditional dualism of mind and matter which still lingered



in Kant disappeared altogether. Fichte, with the masterful scorn of a heroic nature, drove out of the sphere of real existence whatever did not bear the talisman of noble will. The ideal was more and more explicitly identified with the real; to will goodness, or to imagine beauty, was alone to truly live. Hence Art, the carrying out of the ideal, grudgingly tolerated by Rousseau, acquired the enthusiastic halo which for him had surrounded Nature; and the artists of the German Romantic school renewed, in a slightly different form, the individualist extravagances which Rousseau had preached in the name of Nature. If he glorified the impulses of passion, they glorified those of caprice; if he fled to the mountains from the world of convention, they fled to the studio from the world of prose. Art was not a heightening of the actual, but a deliverance from it. Fancy, which affords an escape from the familiar fact, and Irony, which repudiates it, became corner-stones of the Romantic *Poetik*, and catch-words of Romantic controversy. Tieck systematized the cult of the unreal, seized upon the naïve fantasy of the fairy tale, even the whimsical extravagance of the mediæval romance, as the choicest material for drama; and welcomed every rebuff to coherence and probability, every violation of prose, as *ipso facto* a gain for poetry.

Many of these traits reappear among the French Romantics of 1830. But Hugo, Musset, and Gautier, less competent and many-sided theorists than Tieck and the Schlegels, were incomparably better poets; and their most rebellious and defiant work was a revelation of the beauty lurking in neglected or proscribed forms of art; in the freer movement of the Alexandrine, in the bolder poising of imaginative phrase, in the flamboyant, rare word-jewels of the old writers. Hence, while German Romanticism, in the narrower sense, rapidly decayed, the Romanticism of

France has only undergone successive transformations, and has been an element in all the great poetry she possesses.

✕ In England, the autocracy of individual imagination, less loftily announced in theory, was even more energetically and triumphantly asserted in fact.<sup>4</sup> The English Romantic poets lived in far more intimate contact than those of either France or Germany with the glory of the natural world. The most original and unique among them—a Shelley, a Wordsworth, a Keats—conceived their imagination as divining Nature, not as correcting her. No English artist stood up and declared himself emancipated from Nature in the name of Art. Yet no modern poetry was more truly creative than that which thus habitually ‘received the light reflected as a light bestowed.’ Nevertheless, in the period which divides the *Lyrical Ballads* from the early poems of Tennyson, an evident change comes over the significance attached, among the English Romantics, to Art. A Romanticism in which Art was eyed askance, as a form of artifice, gradually passes into a Romanticism in which Art and Nature are two related domains of nearly equal attraction. ‘Nature I loved, and next to Nature Art.’ The change is marked by the gradual extension of Romantic sensibility, as the period advances, to painting, architecture, sculpture. The *Abbey* of Tintern was irrelevant to Wordsworth in 1798; in 1807 he wrote at length of Bolton Abbey, but chiefly as the haunt of his mystic Doe; it was only after 1820 that he found imperishable verse for Milan and the chapel of King’s College.

✓ So far, Romanticism appears as an expansion of the revolutionary individualism of Rousseau. Yet its dominant temper was in society and politics by no means revolutionary. Its political complexion was, indeed, curiously uncertain,—fluctuating, in the turning of a hand, from revolution to reaction. The biography of Romanticism is

full of sudden conversions, fruitful themes of often unjust scandal. F. Schlegel passed from the outrageous licence of *Lucinde* to the bosom of the Catholic church; Wordsworth and Coleridge and Southey became ecclesiastical Tories of the deepest dye, implacable enemies of the revolutionary spirit. Many forces, unconnected with Romanticism, fostered a rapid growth of conservative instincts in the early decades of the century: memories of the Terror, dread of the anarchy of 'Reason,'—all that gave persuasiveness to the reactionary pleadings of De Maistre. And Napoleon's violent reconstruction of the map of Europe everywhere created a revulsion from the cosmopolitan humanity of the Revolution, to a passionate nationalism. Germany, Spain, and Italy were trampled into national life. But Romanticism contained the germs of this transition. It led by paths as plain to the temper which hallows routine and custom, as to that which repudiates them.<sup>1</sup> The organic conceptions which, developed from one point of view, evolved Tieck's despotism of the Ego, prompted from another, an equally pronounced despotism of the fact. This *Romantic Realism* assumed three closely connected forms, in the three spheres of Politics, History, and Religion.

The growth of an organic conception of

Romantic realism. 1. Political.	the State was signified by the disposition to explain all the elements of its structure in terms of mind. Montesquieu had elicited the 'spirit of laws,' Burke discovered in the legislation of a
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<sup>1</sup> The fine inaugural lecture of the Professor of Poetry at Oxford (*Nineteenth Century*, August, 1896,) rests, like his *Liberal Movement in English Literature*, upon a singular disregard for the conservative aspect of Romanticism. I cannot but think that this *idée fixe* vitiates Professor Courthope's otherwise suggestive treatment of these poets.

community its embodied reason. The link between Burke and Rousseau, which both would have repudiated with horror, becomes explicit in Kant. The idealism which found thought to be a factor in individual experience, led him to see in all the groups of facts which spring from human agency, ideal and constructive purpose. In the State, which Rousseau had reluctantly admitted, he found the organized expression of social reason; in the graceful forms of social intercourse, which Rousseau denounced as hollow insincerities, the artistic expression of social sympathy. The very sacrifice of individual impulse involved in all political and social existence was, for Kant, not a reluctantly admitted restriction upon freedom, but an indispensable condition of it. To be free was to have mastered every unsocial instinct. Hence the passion for freedom could take the form of devoted loyalty to a rigidly organized State. To this day the political ideal of the German people involves personal sacrifices, willingly made, which Englishmen think intolerable. Goethe's ethical creed centred in the doctrine that self-restriction is implied in self-development. And Wordsworth abjured, even more loftily, the illusory freedom of unrestraint, in his sublime hymn to Duty, 'through whom the most ancient heavens are fresh and strong,' nay, when he found solace in the self-imposed captivity of the sonnet. A generation later, the thought he there half playfully expressed, inspired the grave intensity of Gautier's *L'Art* :

' Point de contraintes fausses,—  
 Mais que, pour marcher droit,  
 Tu chausses,  
 Muse, un cothurne étroit.'

Thus, from several converging directions, the notion of law gradually detached itself from the associations of force and gathered those of reason. When Fichte roused the German

people to declare their independence it was no longer to the American colonists' Rousseauist formula of the 'rights of man' that he appealed, but to the genius of the German people, ousted indeed from the dismantled political fabric, but vitally informing their thought, their religion, their speech.

National sentiment of this type was a direct stimulus to the study of the national past; and it was one of the sources of the Romantic revival of history. At the same time, that more vital grasp of the coherence of different regions of fact which Romanticism implied, drew the past into touch with the present, and gave a new relevance and import to all its phases. In Germany, in France, the conception of the continuity of history gave a powerful impulse to historical writing. Philosophy was slowly penetrated by the historical spirit. Goethe founded that historical or relative *Æsthetic* which measures the merit of a work of art not by its regularity but by its power of expression. And the two most encyclopædic thinkers of the century—Hegel and Comte—sought to organize the manifold departments of human knowledge as stages in the historic evolution of the spirit of man.

Literature gained, not less than science and philosophy, from the wakening of historical imagination. The romance of the past gathered about its forlorn and desolate remnants, re-peopling the ruined castle, and making the pale parchment eloquent of forgotten story. Chateaubriand and Scott founded the 'historical novel,' while much of Scott's very best work was not so much a re-creation of the past as the portraiture of a living people, with all the rich light and shade, colour and proportion which it acquires when regarded with a historical imagination. Fielding knew his

countrymen as well, and described them as well as Scott did his; but *Tom Jones*, abounding as it does in unsurpassable studies of English character, is quite destitute of the feeling for nationality which gives its romantic fascination to *Waverley*. Germany was the centre of this 'national' phase of Romanticism; in Germany it added fervour to the uprising against Napoleon, and inspired the enthusiastic revival of the *Nibelungenlied*.<sup>1</sup> And Wordsworth, alien, on the whole, from the historical spirit, had addressed his countrymen as those who spoke the tongue of Shakespeare and Milton.

In England, however, literary instinct had far more to do than national sentiment with the eager study of the Elizabethans, of which Lamb and Coleridge were the pioneers; and it was even in defiance of national tradition that the French Romantics did tardy honour to the poets of the *Pléiade*, whom the *classiques* had denounced, and paid homage to the alien heresies of Shakespeare and Goethe. And even where 'national' Romanticism was strongest, it was accompanied by a rich sensibility to strange and exotic literatures. Persia and India were eagerly explored by Rückert, Uhland, the Schlegels. Moore turned from the plaintive songs of Erin to the glittering jewels of the songs of Irân. And Germany and England shared in the still more momentous re-discovery of Greece. The first symptoms of the Hellenic revival are older than any other aspect of Romanticism; Stuart and Revett's epoch-making studies of the Parthenon

<sup>1</sup> The mediæval revival in Germany was thus a response to two distinct lines of Romantic sentiment which it is important to keep apart: the one idealist, revolutionary,—the other conservative, historical; the one pursuing the image of the past as a refuge from reality, the other as a portion of it; the mediævalism of Tieck and the mediævalism of Scott.

date from 1762; Gray's Pindaric odes from 1754. The countless fanaticisms of the revolutionary decade included a classical fanatic—'pagan' Taylor—who translated Plato and Plotinus, and was accused of privately sacrificing bulls to Jupiter. The appointment of Porson to the Greek chair at Cambridge (1793) opened an era in Greek teaching. Yet it was only with Flaxman and with Haydon (at whose urgency the Elgin marbles were purchased) that Greek art began to be understood; only with Landor, Shelley, and Keats that Greek poetry entered vitally into ours. Germany had discovered Greece, as she had discovered Shakespeare, a generation earlier than England, and from Winkelmann and Lessing onward, those kindred forces were the chief agents in the spiritual emancipation of the land. The Hellenic humanism of Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe had then no parallel in England; and Porson little dreamt, when he flung his scornful epigram at the 'Germans in Greek,' how far his own countrymen were behind them in intimate understanding of Greek culture.

Yet the Romantic sense of nationality contained elements which no mere reanimation of historical traditions could completely convey. The first Englishman who was penetrated with this sense was Burke; and to Burke the body politic was invested with a kind of mysterious religious awe. Awe was the natural expression in a mind so imaginative and so penetrated with organic conceptions as his, of that apprehension of an immanent life, informing and controlling all the parts, and yet distinct from them, which the idea of an organism, as we have seen, involves. It becomes intelligible, then, that a revival of the faculty of awe, and of the sensibility to it—a 'Renaissance of Wonder,' in short—should have entered very intimately into Romanticism, and profoundly coloured not only poetry, but

3. Mysticism.  
The 'Renaissance  
of Wonder.'

painting. No doubt the 'Renasceance of Wonder,' like the 'Revival of the past,' had its naïve and spontaneous, as well as its conscious and speculative interpreters; it had its Blake and its Turner, beside its Coleridge, as the other had its Scott and its Delavigne, beside its Schelling. Both, again, reacted upon science as well as upon literature; as the one reanimated history, so the other re-spiritualized religion. Historical and mystical animus often enforced

Poetry of Myth.  
Comparative  
mythology.

each other, and the eager study of the first beginnings of society and letters had its counterpart in the study, no less eager, of the infant workings of religious imagination in myth. Such studies were the soil out of which grew the very flower of the poetry of the mysterious, the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*.

On the other hand, a sensibility to mystery, even more subtle and profound, emerged in minds entirely alien from the historical aspect of Romanticism.

Poetic  
pantheism.

It is this, chiefly, which discriminates the transformed Rousseauism of Wordsworth and Shelley from the simpler naturalism of Rousseau himself. All the elements of Rousseau's ideal reappear, as we have seen, in Wordsworth; but the attraction which 'natural' things exercise upon him is of a far subtler kind. Rousseau found, as it were, clear windows through which he watched delightedly the untroubled image of Nature at work, where Wordsworth saw dim, mysterious openings into the unfathomable depth of things. The child becomes not merely the unstained creature 'fresh from the hand of God,' but the 'father of the man,' the 'hiding-place of man's power;' the wild blossom acquires a strange implication in human destinies, and inspires thoughts too deep for tears; the peasant, besides exemption from the vices of civilization, acquires a hallowing glamour from



the continual contact with Nature, 'in whose eye he lives and dies,' even when all personal worth and virtue have faded out of him. And the last vestiges of Rousseau's deism disappear as his mechanically ordered world becomes animate in the 'wondrous universe' of Wordsworth and Shelley, whose granite frame is 'interpenetrated with Love,' or deeply interfused with a motion and a spirit, which 'impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought,' and 'rolls through all things.'

A literary movement so vast and manifold as Romanticism could not possess any quite definite and precise characteristic of style common to all its phases. Yet it has certain predominant traits which from the very outset its critical directors elevated into a fundamental canon of art, nay, into the ultimate ground of difference between 'ancient' and 'modern' literature. The famous distinction of *Romantic* and *Classic*, into which the Schlegels and Tieck poured all the vials of their æsthetic fervour, obtained little currency in England, but was seized upon with enthusiasm by the French *romantiques* of 1830, in a sense adapted to the very different conditions of their time and place. Without adhering to the phraseology of either, the permanent value of the distinction in literary history may be expressed by saying that style is Romantic in proportion as it presents its object not simply and directly, but through a glamour of imagery and emotion which, according to the quality of the poet, obscures or reveals. The 'romantic' poet sees all things in the light of their larger relations, transcends distinctions, expresses by figure and metaphor; or, again, mingles a lyric personality in the tale he tells, or the picture he paints, breaking its outlines with passion, or embroidering them with fancy. The latter is the *Iyrisme*

which some French historians, *e.g.*, MM. Lanson and Brunetière, expressly identify with *Romantisme*.

Such were the main currents of European Romanticism.

Conclusion. Like every other English version of a great

European movement, English Romanticism had its peculiar originality and strength, and its peculiar limitations. Its chief glory lay, without doubt, in the extraordinarily various, intimate, and subtle interpretation, of the world of 'external Nature,' and of that other world of wonder and romance which the familiar comradeship of Nature generates in the mind of man. Neither France nor Germany made any real advance upon Rousseau's vivid and impassioned landscape painting. But for Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge, Nature is an inexhaustible source and provocative of lovely imaginings. Wordsworth conveys the loneliness of the mountains, Shelley the tameless energies of wind, Keats the embalmed darkness of verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways, with an intensity which makes all other Nature poetry seem pale. And all are masters of that region in which Romance and Nature meet—in which imagination brings us nearer to the heart of reality by apparently deserting it; the region which Coleridge enters when he arrays the dim horror and fascination that the unknown ocean inspires in a phantom garb of poetry to fit it; or Wordsworth, when he renders those mysterious suggestions of unearthly presences—Fear and trembling Hope, and Death the Skeleton, and Time the Shadow—which have always hallowed the shade of great trees; or Keats, when he renders the enchantment of the nightingale's song thrilling through 'casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.'

On the other hand, the poets of English Romanticism had definite limitations. They lacked vision for the world

of man, save under certain broad and simple aspects—the patriot, the peasant, the visionary, the child. They lacked understanding of the past, save at certain points on which the spirit of liberty had laid a fiery finger. In prose, no doubt—the prose of Scott (of which his narrative verse is a province), of Lamb, of Landor, and in the splendid rhetorical verse of Byron—these limitations were in great part transcended. But in poetry they mark the character of the epoch. English poets had not yet flung themselves upon the world of man in its concrete richness and variety. Their Nature was not yet the ‘*unendliche Natur*’ at whose breast all things in heaven and earth drink of the springs of life. Wordsworth’s aspiration to tell of ‘men barricadoed evermore within the walls of cities,’ remained an unfulfilled item in the programme of a recluse; and Shelley’s saviour of humanity hung far aloof among the caverns and precipices of Caucasus. But what they lacked was already present, enriched with almost all that they possessed, in Goethe; all the impulses and instincts of Romanticism in its widest scope are assembled in the poetic cosmos of *Faust*. And in the next generation English poetry also fulfilled Faust’s aspiration to take upon itself the burden of humanity—‘*ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen, und so mein eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern,*’—most signally in the person of Browning; with more variety of tone, but also with more of insular limitation, in Tennyson.



# THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH.

## CHAPTER I.

### STUDY AND SPECULATION.

#### (1) *Science and Politics.*

'POETRY is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.' This famous saying of Wordsworth's significantly opened a period marked, in fact, by a mutual approximation between science and poetry. Poetry, in the very act of becoming romantic, drew nearer to Nature ; its grasp upon reality became more vital as its form became more visionary. But Nature was also drawn nearer to man, and into relation with his highest activities, by the growing disclosure in it of the reflexion of his own intelligence, of response to his own emotion. In Germany, the approximation became, for some three decades, a hasty though rapturous union, fruitful chiefly of unhallowed births. Schelling, Steffens, even Goethe, applied spiritual or organic conceptions with uncritical eagerness to all phases of Nature. In England, on the contrary, where excessive preoccupation with ideas has always been a less pressing danger than a too concrete concern with facts, organic conceptions were slowly evolved in intercourse with classes of phenomena which naturally suggested

them. Scientific curiosity was most keen in regard to those regions of Nature least remote from life. The purely mathematical sciences indeed still furnish some remarkable and some illustrious names—Charles Babbage,<sup>1</sup> Mary Somerville,<sup>2</sup> the two Herschels;<sup>3</sup> and Sir John Herschel and Mrs. Somerville were admirable literary exponents of science. But the epoch-making advances belong to dynamical physics, electricity, chemistry, geology, and physiology. The figment of inert matter, assailed long before by Berkeley, began to recede from physics before the disclosure of the enormous and pervading energies involved in electricity; and the two most brilliant investigators of the day, Brewster<sup>4</sup> and Davy,<sup>5</sup> disclosed unsuspected affini-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Babbage (1792-1871). Published first description of calculating engine (in a note read before Astronomical Society), 1822; *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*, 1832; appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, 1828.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Fairfax (1780-1872), married (as her second husband) Dr. W. Somerville; published papers in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 1826; *The Mechanism of the Heavens*, 1831; *Physical Geography*, 1848.

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Herschel (1738-1822). Sir John Frederick William Herschel (1792-1871), *Catalogues of Double Stars*, 1823 and subsequently; *On the Study of Natural Philosophy*, 1830; *Cape Observations*, 1847; *Familiar Studies in Scientific Subjects*, 1867.

<sup>4</sup> Sir David Brewster (1781-1868). His optical investigations related chiefly to the polarisation of light. Their most conspicuous practical results were the improvement of lighthouse apparatus, and the invention of the stereoscope and the kaleidoscope. With Babbage and Herschel he took part in establishing the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His *Treatise on Optics* appeared in 1831; the *Letters on Natural Magic*, addressed to Scott, in 1831.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Humphrey Davy (1778-1829), Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution, 1802; communicated a long series of papers to the Royal Society, from 1801; *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*, 1812; invented the safety lamp, 1815.

ties with the phenomena of electricity in those of optics and chemistry. By his discovery of the relation between stratification and organic life, William Smith,<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of the period, became the 'father' of scientific geology, and prepared the way for Lyell's<sup>2</sup> explanation of the entire geological past by uniform laws. Lyell was, indeed, the first Englishman entirely penetrated with evolutionary conceptions; yet Darwin himself, his great successor, did not work them out with an eye and hand more persistently set upon the object; indefatigable travel was the condition of his work. A more direct precursor of Darwin was Sir Charles Bell,<sup>3</sup> whose investigation of facial expression and nervous function marked capital steps in the comprehension of the relation of mind to its bodily organ.

None of these fathers of modern science, as has been said, came into intimate or fruitful contact with literature, though almost all had considerable expository powers. But at least two poets were instinctively allured by the affinity between the alchemy of the poet's imagination and that of the laboratory. Shelley defied the traditions of Eton in order to dabble in the forbidden study; Coleridge hung over the experiments of Davy and 'caught metaphors' from his imaginative lips. Fumes from the chemic crucible certainly mingled in that romantic atmosphere whence issued the witchery of *Christabel* and *Kubla*

<sup>1</sup> William Smith (1769-1835), was brought up as a surveyor; *Order of the Strata in the Neighbourhood of Bath*, 1799; *Geological Map of England and Wales*, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875). *Principles of Geology*, 1830-1832.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Charles Bell (1774-1842). *The Anatomy of Expression*, 1804; discovered distinction of sensory and motor nerves, 1807; *System of Comparative Surgery*, 1807; *The Hand, its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as evincing Design*, 1833.

*Khan*. And later on, in the *Aids to Reflection*, he extolled the chemists, with Davy at their head, as having 'given a mortal blow' to materialism by showing that the qualities of a substance stand in no relation to those of its material elements. In the sciences of mind, however, the poets were not merely eager witnesses, but pioneers and discoverers. For the poetic movement itself marked a vast development of those very mental powers which the eighteenth century possessed and comprehended least; and English psychology was essentially the work of the eighteenth century. Whether of the 'Commonsense' or the 'Associational' school, its analysis was wholly incompetent to deal with the subtle spiritual energy which Wordsworth and Coleridge called Imagination. The Scottish followers of Reid, who gracefully expounded what they called philosophy from the Edinburgh chair, stood in this respect as completely aloof from the literary movement as Bentham himself, who roundly declared that poetry was misrepresentation.<sup>1</sup> And the Association school produced

<sup>1</sup> Neither Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) nor Thomas Brown (1778-1820) is entitled long to engage the historian. Both were famous lecturers, and impressed a large number of persons with the dignity of philosophic study. Stewart wrote a good deal (especially *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 1792-1827; *Philosophical Essays*, 1810; *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man*, 1828), and his writing is proverbial for expository skill. As an empirical observer, too, of psychological facts he showed genuine acuteness, and the exposition of Reid's ideas, in which his so-called philosophy mainly consists, was both more precise and more suggestive than the original text. But he was incapable of making any real advance upon Reid, and equally incapable of retreating decisively from the barren position which Reid, as a metaphysician, had taken up. His greatest distinction is the influence he admittedly had upon the school of Jouffroy and Cousin, which, though at bottom as barren as his own, commanded a far wider intellectual horizon. Brown, Stewart's coadjutor and successor in the Edin-



as its characteristic æsthetics Alison's *Essays on the Principles of Taste*, which had the fatal defect of satisfying Francis Jeffrey. The modern psychology of poetry was no academic product; its foundations were laid, in England, by the discussions of the Stowey poets, by Wordsworth's *Preface*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Hazlitt's *Lectures*, De Quincey's *Confessions*, and Shelley's *Defence*. In Germany it had advanced far more swiftly, thanks to the admirable union, in a Lessing and a Schiller, of critical and æsthetic power; we shall see in a later chapter how potently, in this form, it allured the sensitive intellect of Coleridge.

Finally, the great and difficult science since known as sociology was slowly coming into view, and some English contributions to it were of lasting moment. But their authors were concerned mainly, like Malthus and Ricardo, with the single province of economics, which the latter, indeed, deliberately isolated from the rest; while Bentham's system, imposing as it is, ignored history and perverted psychology, and was fruitful only in its bearing upon practice.

burgh chair (1810-20), had a more energetic and brilliant intellect, and illustrates the rapid disintegration of the Scottish school under the potent influence of Hume. Brown, however, applied the method of association (under the name of 'suggestion') with some independence, especially to the analysis of space-perception, and introduced the yet unnoticed factor of a 'muscular sense.' But he could not wholly emancipate himself from the *assujettissement* of the 'Commonsense' creed, and after reducing one after the other of Reid's first principles, intuitively known, to secondary products, permitted a slender residue to remain. In spite of his original and suggestive work in detail, Brown thus failed to create a perfectly coherent system of thought. This defect impaired, and within a generation totally destroyed, his influence upon the course of speculation. His death, in the prime of manhood, left his work incomplete; it was chiefly represented in two works, the *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*, 1804-18, and his *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Mind*, 1820.

This bearing upon practice, always a note of English thought, became in fact peculiarly dominant in the generation which followed the Revolution. The reaction against Rousseau's abstractions had gravely discredited all abstract thinking applied to politics; and Burke's horror of the 'metaphysicians' was rapidly infiltrating into the general intelligence. 'Ideas' and 'principles' began to play a slighter part in controversy, carried less authority, and were more closely tested by experience. Even the most direct inheritors of the spirit of Rousseau, do not speak his language. Godwin, the inexhaustible debater of 1789, becomes a half-forgotten, silent listener to Lamb and Coleridge, a writer of novels more and more tinged with Romance; Bentham, ignored in the Revolution, directs the movement to Reform. The old optimist dream of 'perfectible man, emancipated from death and from sex,' gives way to the sober formulas of meliorism. Even Shelley delivers his restored mankind (*Prometheus*, 1819) from 'guilt and pain,' but not from 'chance and death and mutability.' Paine, the cosmopolitan refugee, the 'citizen' without a city, was the demagogue of the old period: Cobbett, the substantial squire of Botley, is the demagogue of the new; and the colourless formula of the *Rights of Man* acquires a definite reference to those of the English farmer. Among enlightened Conservatives and moderate reformers, this quicker feeling for concrete existing facts was naturally often coloured by the political relativism of Burke. Two thinkers of high distinction may be said to have carried on the Burkian influence, though each shaped it to his own fashion. Mackintosh, the philosophical Whig *par excellence*, mediating with his amiably receptive talent between the historic and the reforming schools, and failing to move either greatly; and Coleridge, in whom the thought of Burke and Montesquieu reappeared, steeped in

the idealism of Germany, to become, towards the close of our period, the one rallying-point of the intellectual antagonists of Bentham.

We may thus distinguish in the sociological speculation of the period four leading types: I. The Democratic Reformers. II. The Philosophical Radicals and Malthus. III. The Moderate Whigs. IV. The Romantic Conservatives.

The political work of Godwin practically ended with his *Enquirer*, a series of essays, 1797. In the first generation of the present century his fame, as has been said, rapidly became a shadow. But at the outset his was still one of the most imposing reputations in the country. *Political Justice* (1793) had been the one attempt by an Englishman, in a century of fierce political passions, to build up a reasoned system of politics. Its paradoxes were palpable; but they were evolved from cherished principles with an air of cogency that made it extremely stimulating and persuasive. Only its high price saved its author from a government prosecution; and one of the first signs of reaction was the discharge of artillery, of various calibre, by Malthus, Mackintosh and Parr, against this formidable fortress of the revolution.

Bearing little resemblance to the *Contrat Social*, *Political Justice* is, perhaps, truer to the spirit of Rousseau. Both started from the demand for individual liberty; but while Rousseau tried to meet it by turning the State into a mechanism for giving effect to the universal will, Godwin saw in government, in law, even in property, and in marriage, only restraints upon liberty and obstacles to progress. Yet Godwin was not, strictly speaking, an anarchist. He transferred the seat of government from thrones and parliaments to the reason in the breast of every man. On the power of reason, working freely, to

convince all the armed unreason of the world and to subdue all its teeming passion, he rested his boundless confidence in the 'perfectibility' of man—or, at least, according to the more cautious phrase of the second edition, in his capacity of 'indefinite progress towards perfection.'

After Godwin, the most conspicuous and inflexible English defender of the Revolution was T. Paine (1737-1808). Thomas Paine. Paine's career had opened with his vigorous advocacy of the cause of the Colonists in *Commonsense* (1776). It virtually closed when the homely *quondam* ally of Burke assailed the author of the *Reflections* in the *Rights of Man* (1791-92)—a not wholly ineffective retort, which became a sort of political text-book for the streets, as *Political Justice* was to be for the study. His *Age of Reason* (1793-1807) provided the same audience with a text-book of rational religion—a crude but often acute and forcible exposition of deism.

The self-taught son of a Surrey peasant, William Cobbett (1762-1835) first showed his quality by attacking, as a private soldier, the abuses of army administration. Prudently withdrawing to America, he presently became notorious as a reckless defender of his country and its least American institutions. For eight years (1792-1800) 'Peter Porcupine' outraged and fascinated the Republic by an inexhaustible stream of journalism as powerful as it was unscrupulous. When at length driven from the country by repeated libel suits, the ex-sergeant found the English government eager to utilize his pen. His famous weekly journal, the *Political Register*, was accordingly started, as a government organ, in 1802, just a century after the foundation of its nearest English analogue, Defoe's *Review*. Such a position could not last. Cobbett's Church-and-King principles, though genuine

enough, had but a slender root, and rapidly fell to pieces when the stimulus of contradiction was withdrawn. The *Political Register* began, from about 1804, to dispense a robust opposition criticism, which, beneath endless eccentricities and illusions in statement and theory, had almost always a hard bottom of practical rightness. Fined and imprisoned in 1809, he still wrote on; and after the war, reducing the price of his paper, began to play a commanding part in the Liberal movement which resulted in the first Reform Bill. He subsequently sat for a short time, with little acceptance, in the Reformed parliament.

Cobbett's inconsistencies are a proverb. Few publicists have contradicted themselves so flatly and so often, and yet produced so powerful an impression of tenacity and honesty. His opinions shifted like a kaleidoscope, but the man was hewn out of rock. His copiousness was enormous, and though he did not adorn all that he touched, he touched nothing without setting his unmistakable stamp upon it. Grammar, finance, church history, farming, practical morality, and a score of other subjects Cobbett stripped of pedantry and technique for the behoof of the vast uneducated mob of Georgian England. There was a strain of the Tory in him, and his writings, we are credibly told, were better relished by the Tories than by the Whigs. It is not merely that he did not attack property, like Proudhon or Godwin; he was himself full of the zest of ownership, invested his considerable earnings in making Botley a kind of bucolic Abbotsford, and even defended traps and springes. If he assailed the 'hireling *Times*' for proposing martial law against the Luddites, he equally discountenanced the Luddite excesses. If he inveighed against luxury, like Rousseau and Godwin, it was in favour of no abstract type—whether noble savage or passionless reasoner—but of the

plain-living, substantial old English yeoman who lived on *bread, beef, and beer*, instead of consuming tea and sugar for the benefit of Indian nabobs. Farming and forestry, gardening and straw-plaiting, lay as near his heart as a lowering of taxes or extension of franchise. Miss Mitford happily described him, after a visit to Botley, as a compound of the soldier and the farmer. The *Political Register* is Cobbett's monument in both capacities. The 'Rural Rides' which mingle so pleasantly with the hotter matter, are the harvest of an eye as keen as Miss Mitford's own for the charms of homely English landscape, as well as of a many-sided appreciation of hard facts which her tender idealism passed by. And all that is strong, sinewy, and simple in Cobbett seems to have filtered through, unalloyed, into his English style, which his harshest critics have accordingly praised without reserve. He may swell with arrogance, but his prose never becomes tumid; his facts and his reasons may be grotesque, but he never chooses the wrong word. His fundamentally concrete mind was too ready to brandish scientific formulas of which he half grasped the scope; but the same fundamentally concrete quality of mind which prevented him from being a master of theory, or a shaper of ideas, preserved him, as a writer, from the abstract formalism of style which the later eighteenth century bequeathed to the early nineteenth. His style is himself, full of personal flavour, anecdote, colloquial turns, questions, gibes, nicknames, apparently disdaining all literary conventions, and yet of consummate literary distinction. In function, if not in genius, he is the Burns of modern prose, and his example, though less efficacious, was not less salutary, in a generation which gathered its political teaching among the technicalities of Bentham, the verboriosities of Mackintosh, and the involutions of Coleridge.

Alone among distinguished Englishmen of his day,

J. Bentham  
(1748-1832).

Jeremy Bentham could claim that the prolonged crisis of the Revolution left his opinions as it found them. Thirteen years before it broke out, his *Fragment on Government* (1776) had initiated with vigour and brilliance that quieter revolution in English jurisprudence of which he was to be the Danton as well as the Rousseau; and the most systematic exposition of his views, the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* was completed and printed by 1780, though published only on the eve of the outbreak in 1789. During the remainder of his long life, Bentham, though he wrote incessantly, was not so much a figure in English literature as an indirect source of literature in others. Throughout the Revolution and Napoleonic period his reputation was rather European than English; much of his work first appeared in the translation by a French disciple, Dumont; and Hazlitt only put a high colour on truth when he said that the Siberian savage was better acquainted with the great framer of laws than were the people of Westminster, where he lived. But in the later years of the great war a knot of able thinkers gathered round him, who gradually constructed about a nucleus derived from him, a compact body of political and economic doctrine, which came to be popularly known by his name. The most original, vigorous and influential of these were James Mill and Ricardo. After the close of the war, the 'Benthamites' rapidly gained ascendancy. Many causes contributed to stimulate reaction against the long Tory rule:—crying political and social abuses, no longer overlooked in the exigencies of war; widespread misery from loss of Continental custom; indignation at the tyrannies of the Holy Alliance and the connivance of the English Government; and, finally, the scandalous trial of

Queen Caroline. But the popular resentment needed not only a strong voice—which it found in Cobbett—but a solid theoretic basis, if it was to win the brain of England. The old Liberalism could not supply this: Godwinian idealism was utterly discredited; Whiggish empiricism, with its acquiescence in the existing constitution of Church and State, could supply no basis for change. The new school, with its compact schemes of reasoned reform, provided exactly what was needed, and rapidly became the ‘philosophic core’ of the whole movement. Its hostility to Whiggism was marked from the first. One of its earliest manifestoes, Grote’s pamphlet on Radical reform (1820), was a reply to an article by Mackintosh in the *Edinburgh*; and the foundation of the chief organ of the party, the *Westminster Review* (1824), was signalized by James Mill’s memorable survey, in the first number, of the political career of the great Whig quarterly. From about 1820 the new Radicalism began to be a power at Cambridge, with which, as with Oxford, neither Bentham nor Mill nor Ricardo had any personal ties. The brilliant advocacy of Charles Austin, one of the most gifted men of his generation, and, somewhat later, of Charles Buller, effected there what none of the older men could have achieved; and to the former in particular was due the tendency to Benthamic Liberalism among the higher classes which marks the closing years of our period. In the mercantile world, too, the new school made rapid strides; and here it was especially the economic side of their work which told; lending, however, as every such partial influence must, an indirect attraction to the other branches of their teaching. In Ricardo’s *Political Economy*, the city-man saw his business methods turned into a philosophy, and himself into an ideal. The economic crises of the war had given the economists an opportunity of intervening with



effect, and the authority gained in the Bullion controversy initiated that close alliance between capital and theoretic political economy which has been discredited only in our own day. In George Grote, moreover, the Benthamic politics acquired a direct and potent link with the business world. The petition of the London merchants for Free Trade, 1820, was the decisive symptom of the conversion of the business world to the views of Adam Smith; and the third decade of the century saw the beginning of that slow destruction of our protective system which it took almost a generation to complete.

Bentham thus replaced—as well as preceded—Godwin in the philosophic direction of English Liberalism; and the movements which they led were even more sharply opposed than the men. Godwin resembles Bentham in his coldness, in his repugnance to the violent methods of the Revolution, in his want of sympathetic imagination, in his rejection of theology, and in his blind contempt for the past. But Godwin's system still bore the marks of its origin in the glowing prophecies of Rousseau; with all its abstractness of manner, it belonged, and appealed, rather to literature than to science. His doctrines of the subjugation of appetite by intellect, and of the perfectibility of man, though in him due mainly to psychological deficiencies, were full of inspiration for the young idealists of his time. Bentham's following was of a different type. His choicest product was not a Shelley, but a Ricardo; his revolution was to be effected by legislation, Godwin's by argument. To the French Revolution he objected in principle as well as in method. The doctrine of Natural Rights was as abhorrent to him as to Burke. He replaced it by the single canon of 'Utility,' defined with a precision in which only Priestley had preceded him, and applied with a constructive and analytic power altogether his own. The

famous formula 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' which he proposed as the basis of legislation, had been suggested, nearly in the same form, by Priestley. It was reserved for Bentham to attempt a detailed calculation of the 'lots' of pleasure and pain resulting from any given legislative act—the evident preliminary to any methodic reconstruction of the law. Bentham fully recognized that the 'utility,' in this sense, of a law varies in different communities and periods; and in so far his standpoint resembles that of the historical school, of Montesquieu and Burke. But he is quite without that imaginative discernment of the utilities embodied in every existing law, which underlies the passionate conservatism of Burke. And, on the other hand, he shares with the revolutionary thinker, the instinct for equality which made him insist that the happiness of every individual is of precisely the same value ('every one is to count as one, and no one as more than one'), and further, that the total happiness is likely to be greatest when the means of happiness are equally diffused.

James Mill, born in 1773, the son of a country shoemaker in Forfarshire, was brought up for the ministry. At Edinburgh (1790-98) he became well versed in classics, in Greek and Scottish speculation, and in the traditional divinity. After some brief experiences as preacher and tutor, he in 1802 came to London in search of literary work, supported himself for several years by a precarious journalism, and began (1806) his great history of India. In 1808 he made the acquaintance of Bentham, which swiftly ripened to intimacy, and to discipleship. From the 'master' Mill consented to accept pecuniary benefits to which only that relationship could reconcile a man of his pride; being with his whole family his guest for months at a time at Ford

J. Mill  
(1773-1836).

Abbey. In 1818, his *History of India* was at length published; an application of democratic ideas to the criticism of the past of which there had as yet been no serious example. Mill was in this respect the precursor of Grote. The history, of which more will be said in another chapter, was immediately successful, and in spite of its severe attacks upon the Company, procured him in 1819 a place in the India House, which in a few years enabled him to exercise a powerful influence upon the Government of India. Mill's personal ascendancy, in which he far surpassed Bentham, was of the utmost importance in the diffusion of Bentham's ideas. Of his other writings, the article on 'Government' contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is a trenchant *résumé* of Radical politics, attacked afterwards by Macaulay. His *Fragment on Mackintosh*, composed shortly before Mackintosh's death, and only published in 1835, assailed with too unqualified severity that thinker's strictures upon utilitarianism; while his *Analysis of the Human Mind* (1829) provided the detailed psychology which was still lacking in the system of his school, though taken for granted by Bentham throughout;—an addition fully adopted by his son.

David Ricardo, born in 1772, in London, was the son of a stockbroker, and in due time entered his father's business. He was already twenty-seven when the study of Adam Smith, during a temporary retirement at Bath (1799), turned his thoughts definitely to the problems of Political Economy. The extraordinary economic conditions introduced by the war presented these problems under new lights, and made their solution a matter of grave practical urgency. In 1809 the over-issue of paper-money put a premium upon gold which his pamphlet on *The High Price of Bullion* conclusively

D. Ricardo  
(1772-1823).

explained, though without convincing Parliament. In 1815 the opening of the corn markets of the Continent, and the monopoly-price of corn at home, put the advocates of Protection on their defence. Malthus and Ricardo took opposite sides, on grounds characteristic of both. For Ricardo supported his case for Free Trade in corn upon deductions from the theory of rent which he had himself adopted from Malthus, while Malthus was less concerned to draw inferences from his own theorem than to survey afresh the facts of the situation. Malthus supported the policy of restricting the importation of foreign corn, lest the price of corn at home should fall and the profits of raising it dwindle or disappear. Ricardo replied by a series of propositions demonstrating, with apparently cogent logic, that if the price of corn fell, the loss would fall not upon profits, but upon rent. The argument, resumed in detail in his *Principles of Political Economy*, 1817, was thoroughly characteristic of Ricardo. It is made up of abstract propositions, true only when a host of interfering conditions which are in practice normal are supposed away. And the practical conclusion, in favour of unrestricted importation, is only made cogent by the tacit assumption which runs through his writing, that if capitalists do not lose, all must be well. The root of all his warfare with Protection is that it hampers trade. One of his boldest and most brilliant combinations, set forth in the essay on the Funding System (1820), proposes to pay off the National Debt, with a view chiefly of getting rid of those vexatious impositions upon free dealing—customs and excise. Three years later he died, leaving as his legacy a dangerously fascinating method, which a quarter of a century later still dominated the younger Mill, and in spite of his wide sympathies and open-minded candour towards the idols of his school, fatally injured his work.

Ricardo's great rival had opened his career by delivering, from the side of economics, the most momentous of all the assaults upon the revolutionary philosophy. Thomas Robert Malthus, fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, was residing with his father—an executor of Rousseau and an ardent Jacobin—at Albury, Surrey, when, in 1797, Godwin published his *Enquirer*. A discussion, between father and son, of the essay on *Avarice and Profusion* started the general question of the future improvement of society. This economic path of approach to a familiar problem proved singularly fruitful, and in the course of the next year Malthus was ready with his *Essay on Population*.

The political situation was one that threw into glaring relief precisely that class of economic facts which arrested his eye. The immense expansion of manufacture during the latter half of the century had been accompanied by an unprecedented growth of the population in the manufacturing districts, a large part of which, however, was permanently on the border of starvation, while another part, scarcely less large, was only prevented from passing that border by a demoralizing system of poor-relief. Then, in 1793, came the war; the price of corn suddenly rose, and in 1795 England was nearer revolution than she had been brought by any arguments of Price or Paine. The army of paupers swelled daily; but still the cry for more population went up unchecked from statesman and from manufacturer. National defence and capitalist profit alike demanded an incessant supply of the commodity *man*, and Pitt was actually proposing, when Malthus wrote, to stimulate its production by making poor-law relief proportionate to the size of the family. Warning voices had not been wanting. Already, in 1761, Dr. Robert Wallace had found a fatal objection to communism in the excessive

population which diffused well-being would generate, and both Godwin and Condorcet had felt the difficulty and attempted a reply to it: Condorcet, with the suicidal suggestion of State-aid; Godwin, with his fantastic hypothesis of the future extinction of sexual instinct. Malthus brushed both replies aside, and fastened with characteristic tenacity upon the concrete facts which indicate the relation between population and food. His argument, as has well been pointed out, consists of three separate propositions of very different importance. That 'population can never exceed the means of subsistence,' was a truism already well understood. The gist of his theory lay in the second proposition, that it always *tends* to exceed them; and in the third, that it is only prevented from exceeding them by starvation, vice, disease and war. Man, as drawn by Malthus, was thus in startling contrast with Godwinian man, and in his first sketch not very much more real. The purely rational being, emancipated from sex and from death, was confronted with a creature of appetite who lived only to eat and to generate.

It was easy to suggest the results of providing, for such a being as this, Godwin's ideal state of uniformly diffused means and unrestricted impulse, or any approach to it. Was the social reformer then to despair? Of reform, yes; but of progress by no means. For, with a singular blending of theological unction and genuine scientific insight, Malthus insisted on those fertile half truths which were presently to furnish Darwin with the key to evolution,—that 'moral evil is necessary to the production of moral excellence,' that civilization is promoted by the struggle for existence, that 'the world itself is but a mighty process for awakening matter into mind.'

The storm aroused by the essay is still a familiar tradition. A score of forgotten 'replies' intervened between the

first edition and the second. Tories, theologians, democrats and poets, for the most part denounced it; but the Whig lawyers and economists rallied with surprising alacrity to its defence. Mackintosh and Brougham gave in their adhesion, Dr. Parr, in his famous *Spital Sermon*, 1800, used it with damaging effect against Godwin, and Pitt himself dropped his proposed additions to the Poor-law in deference to Malthus's criticism;—a foretaste of the day, a generation later, when the entire Poor-law system was to be recast under Malthus's influence.

Malthus was, however, too genuine an observer not to seek a broader inductive basis for his great generalizations. The so-called second edition of the *Essay* (1803), virtually a new book, is based upon a laborious collection of economic facts from all parts of Europe, and is as superior to the first in cogency as it is inferior in style. The harshness of his theory was now qualified by two important concessions. He admitted 'prudential restraint' among the 'checks' to population; he allowed that extreme misery was not a source of progress. In this form the theory became a direct incentive to the promotion of education, and of the reform, but not abolition, of Poor-law relief. Godwin, indeed, believing that men were naturally 'prudent' when relieved of government control, held that Malthus had, by the former admission, virtually admitted 'indefinite perfectibility' itself. The practical Benthamites, on the other hand, seized upon the doctrine, as Mill has told us, 'with ardent zeal,' as the only means of realizing 'indefinite improvability'—the formula of their less exalted generation—'by securing full employment and high wages to the whole labouring population, through a voluntary restriction of their increase.' Psychologically, too, the Malthusian man who acts from appetite tempered by prudence, had a close affinity to the Benthamite man, who rationally seeks his own

pleasure. The doctrine of Malthus was thus built firmly into the imposing edifice of the Benthamite system; so firmly that an apparent but illusory inference from it, the unlucky wage-fund theory, for forty years shared its authority over the economists of the school, to be at length reluctantly abandoned by the younger Mill. Malthus himself, indeed, never belonged to them; and from the first appearance of Ricardo to his death (1823), was by far the most formidable opponent of the Ricardian economy, except, naturally, of those features in it which were borrowed from his own. After the Whigs and the Benthamites, the Tories were the next to accept, tardily enough, a doctrine which, as has been aptly said, changed 'a presumption in favour of human progress into a presumption against it.' The *Quarterly* surrendered in 1817. But Godwin, after a long silence, assailed it once more, quite ineffectively, in 1820, and Cobbett remained a scoffer to the end.

The Associational psychology became constructive and political in the hands of Bentham and Mill. In James Mackintosh the school of Stewart stepped from its academic seclusion into the world of politics and law, only to betray more obviously its academic quality; its capacity for learned and luminous exposition of principles, but not for the philosophy that shapes lives and transforms states.

After a desultory studentship at Aberdeen and Edinburgh, in which he had devoured metaphysics, neglected medicine, shone in debate, and formed a friendship with Robert Hall, Mackintosh had gone up, in 1788, to London, and mingled eagerly in politics and journalism on the popular side in the intervals of reading for the bar. He was not yet called when Burke's *Reflections* (November, 1790,) threw down a challenge to every defender of the Revolution. Six months later, the young law-student replied with the



*Vindiciæ Gallicæ* (April, 1791). Mackintosh had several special qualifications for the task. He thoroughly understood Burke; he had a familiarity, extraordinary for his age, with the field of political and social history in which Burke was a master. The difference between them springs largely from a different mode of approaching the domain which both commanded. 'All Burke's theory,' as Mackintosh said in his striking character of him (*Life*, p. 69 f.), 'lay in the immediate neighbourhood of practice. . . . He never generalized so far as to approach the boundaries of metaphysics.' Burke's immense play of intellect was nourished by a supreme reverence for the concrete fact; while Mackintosh's wealth of concrete knowledge is vitalized by his passion for ideas. All rational politics were for him the reduction of ideas to practice; he retorts to Burke's sarcasms on 'geometrical' politics, that theory is in politics 'what geometry is in mechanics,—the condition of all progress, and that politics without universal principles is as morality without fixed rules.' In the French Revolution he saw a consummate example of the application of the principle of Freedom,—'the immortal daughter of Reason, of Justice, of God.' But Mackintosh's Freedom, even at this stage, is very unlike the anarchic Freedom of Godwin. It is opposed to tyranny, not to control; it is the Freedom of the constitutional lawyer, not of the visionary Antinomian. For the rest, the *Vindiciæ* is, as a piece of writing, notwithstanding some debating-society flourishes, the most effective thing that Mackintosh ever did. Burke's natural greatness of manner is not, indeed, his, but there are passages of figured eloquence which the rhetoric of the master probably kindled in his naturally somewhat formal intellect.

The *Vindiciæ* made Mackintosh a famous man. The Whigs welcomed a successor to the great deserter; the

Tories admired, prophetically. The one damaging criticism to which the book was subjected was that of events: and he was the first to admit its force. 'Ah, messieurs,' he replied to some Frenchmen, who complimented him on the book a few years later, 'vous m'avez si bien réfuté!' In a review of Burke's first *Letters on a Regicidal Peace* (November, December, 1796), he scarcely affected to conceal his change of front. Burke was gratified, and the intimate personal relations which followed probably contributed to hurry Mackintosh, despite his Scotch circumspection, into a fervour of reaction which his cooler judgment disapproved. 'You, Mr. Mackintosh, shall be the faithful knight of the romance; the brightness of your sword will flash destruction on the filthy progeny of . . . that mother of all evil, the French Revolution.' The famous Lectures on the Law of Nature and of Nations, given by Mackintosh in Lincoln's Inn (1799-1800), seem, as originally delivered, to have literally fulfilled this injunction. 'As to our visionary sceptics and philosophers,' says Hazlitt, who was present, 'he hewed them as a carcase fit for hounds.' Godwin was present, too, but only to hear 'the principles of reform scattered in all directions,' and *Political Justice* refuted with a violence for which Mackintosh afterwards made honourable amends. Of the contents of the Lectures we can judge only from the preliminary discourse, which was read, we are told, with delight by all parties. It provided, in fact, for the political persuasions then dominant in thinking England, a philosophic framework in which the revolutionary appeal to first principles was most seductively blended with the Burkian appeal to custom and use. It was a system having the British constitution for its apex, and universal human nature for its base. Many of the catchwords of the *Vindiciæ* are retained, but they are now penetrated

with the significations thrown about them by Burke. 'Freedom' is still 'the end of all government;' but it is against the anarchist, not the tyrant, that it now has to be maintained. The old revolutionary antithesis of law and freedom is so far transcended, that they come near to be an identity. 'Men are more free under every government, even the most imperfect, than they would be if it were possible for them to exist without any government at all.' Mackintosh marks the point at which the political ideas of Montesquieu and Burke began decisively to infiltrate into the current thought of Englishmen.

He never again stood in such close relation to the mind of England. His brilliant defence of Peltier (1803) was followed by five years of uncongenial exile as an Indian judge, from which he returned to be for the rest of his life the most many-sided, amiable, respected, and ineffective of eminent Englishmen. Probably in those later years the 'very severe question' which he records to have been put to him in Paris occurred to many: 'What were the works by which I had gained so high a reputation?' In parliament he laboured sedulously for Reform and Catholic Emancipation, but his academic speeches, masterly in their kind, were more esteemed than enjoyed; and the want of narrative power, common in minds of his cast, prevented his executing more than a fragment of the English History, in which his vast knowledge might have achieved much. Better adapted to his talent was the history of ethical speculation which occupied the last years of his life, and appeared as one of the well-known *Dissertations* prefixed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1830). It remained, till the middle of the century, the most authoritative document of the 'Intuitive' school of Morals. But the position of the Scottish Intuitionists is qualified by an important distinction which Mackintosh

was the first to press home, and which throws a vivid light upon the character of his mind. Neither Hume, Paley, nor Bentham had distinguished the psychological question how we perceive rightness, from the ethical question, what kinds of action we call right, nor yet from the historical question, by what process, if any, our perception of rightness has been reached. On the first, Mackintosh held, with that side of his intellect on which he was akin to the abstract school of Commonsense, that we intuitively perceive rightness. And he rejected with unusual trenchancy the crude Benthamite reduction of the act to a form of self-love. But, on the other hand—and here the Burkian aspect of his mind became apparent—he entirely adopted the Benthamite view that the actual rightness of an act must be tested by its conformity to the needs of men; and, further, asked the cogent question which marks the emergence of the historic and the subsidence of the Naturalistic point of view—whether conscience would have less authority if it were shown to be derived. Thus in both respects Mackintosh marks with much precision the turning-point of two epochs.

In Coleridge we reach the solitary exponent of Romanticism in social and political philosophy. The English mind, with all its profound capacity for poetry, has always been prone to keep its poetry apart from its practice; and it nowhere admitted the application of poetical principles more tardily and reluctantly than in politics. Bentham and Cobbett were not more inaccessible to such influences than the old-fashioned Tory or Whig. Coleridge, in fact, had to create his audience as a thinker even more than as a poet. How far he succeeded in this his generous critic, J. S. Mill, has borne a well-known testimony. 'No one has contributed more to shape the opinions among younger

S. T. Coleridge  
(1772-1834).

men, who can be said to have any opinions at all.' This was due, in part, to the extraordinary and continuous spell which he exercised by conversation; but far more to the fact that his system had the air of reconciling in a higher unity the opposed principles of the revolutionary epoch, Progress and Order—the individualism of Rousseau, and the historic relativism of Burke. This 'reconciliation' was not the work of Coleridge; it was already accomplished in the development of German speculation from Kant to Schelling, and this supplied both the guiding impulse and the substantial groundwork of all Coleridge's later thought. The affinity of Kant to Rousseau has been already dwelt upon.<sup>1</sup> Rousseau affirmed the fundamental participation of the individual in the constitution of the state: Kant affirmed the fundamental participation of the individual in the constitution of experience. No doubt an experience thus constituted was relative, and 'understanding,' to which it was related, became *ipso facto* incompetent for absolute judgments; but man had yet one means of access to absolute Reality, in the 'moral law' which reveals itself to his 'Practical Reason.' This distinction provided Coleridge with a speculative weapon which he cannot be acquitted of having abused. It enabled him to assert for Man an intuitive knowledge of ultimate principles, an inner wisdom, a spiritual insight; and yet to condemn the unreserved use of intellect. Hence his teaching was double-fronted. It pointed, on the one hand, against those who ignored the divine 'Reason' in man, against the political system in which he is a slave, the economical system in which he is a chattel, the theology which reduces him to a blind believer, the ethics in which he discovers right by calculating consequences. It pointed, on the other hand, against those who

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the forcible discussion in Prof. Adamson's *Fichte*, ch. i.

claimed absolute validity for his thought, and, in particular, constructed systems of politics by deduction, like Rousseau and his followers.

It was to this latter error that the political division of the *Friend* (1809) was mainly devoted. Burke himself had not more strenuously insisted that legislation must be based not upon 'universal principles,' but wholly upon 'expediency.' By this he meant not only that it must be relative to existing circumstances of time and place, but that it must conduce to the end for which the state was instituted. The second was, for Coleridge, implied in the first. For he conceived—and this was the vital part of his thought—the 'ultimate aim' or 'idea' of the State to be throughout its existence a persistent influence diffused through the minds and consciences of its public men, enforcing and sustaining all political changes which tend to realize it, and, sooner or later, starving out any which thwart it. This organic conception of the body politic underlies the apparently ambitious metaphysics of Coleridge's famous essay *On the Constitution of Church and State* (published 1828). 'The enlightened Radical ought to rejoice over such a Conservative as Coleridge,' wrote J. S. Mill, in his equally famous review of it. Mill was clearly attracted by a type of Reformer who asked of a doctrine not 'whether it was true,' but 'what it meant,' and sought not to extinguish institutions, but to make them a reality. His admiration marks the first step of the transition among progressive thinkers in England from the constitution-mongering of Bentham, to the evolutionary views of progress worked out from their different stand-points by Comte and by Darwin. Coleridge's plan—warmly approved by Mill—of reconciling 'Permanence' and 'Progress' by an equal representation of the classes which promote them, was a mechanical solution of the

problem more profoundly stated in Comte's aphorism, 'progress is the development of order.' But he was as far as Comte from relying wholly upon political machinery; and his conception of a National Church that should embrace the whole 'spiritual power' of the Nation exercised its futile fascination over a crowd of distinguished intellects in the next generation. In grotesqueness of detail his scheme scarcely fell short of Comte's.

Finally, in economics, Coleridge, like his successor, Mr. Ruskin, was weak where the great Benthamite school was strong, and his fantastic speculations provoked Mill to call him, with unwonted bitterness, 'an arrant driveller.' But he seized the one point which the current economy theoretically neglected, if it did not in practice ignore, the supremacy of well-being over wealth.

## CHAPTER II.

### STUDY AND SPECULATION.

#### (2) *The Dawn of Spiritualism in Theology.*

THE subtle and suggestive living critic who traced 'Theology in the English poets' might have supplemented his book with one tracing the dawn of poetry, or of ideas akin to poetry, in the English theologians. For the revival of theological thinking in the third decade of the century had evident affinities with the revival of poetry at the close of its predecessor. The same changed way of regarding nature and man which revealed undreamed-of possibilities in verse, also disclosed new significance in formulas which had become barren to their most dogmatical defenders. English theology in the later eighteenth century had, in fact, ceased to be speculative at all; and its philosophic impotence is peculiarly evident in the pages of its most luminous and persuasive exponent, Paley.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere are the virtues and the vices of the mechanical modes of thought more easy to study than in the work of this accomplished senior wrangler, who made theology as transparently coherent as a proposition of Euclid, and as devoid of all appeal to the deeper instincts of man. God was a remote artificer who, after constructing the world, refrained from

<sup>1</sup> William Paley (1743-1805), *Horae Paulinae*, 1790; *Evidences of Christianity*, 1794; *Natural Theology*, 1802.



any further concern with it than that of giving evidence of His existence by occasional interferences with its order. Such a God once admitted, 'miracles' became beyond dispute; and thus the miracle of the Christian Revelation was attached by rigid logic to the most obvious conclusions of natural theology. But in relation to Revelation itself, human reason was loudly proclaimed to be impotent, and controversy degenerated from a discussion of principles to one of evidences and texts. This did not prevent religious emotion from discharging itself with great energy and social efficacy through the medium of a creed thus conceived, and Evangelicalism performed, in the person of an Elizabeth Fry, a Wilberforce,<sup>1</sup> a Clarkson, ever memorable services to the English people. But that detachment from the living currents of thought, which rendered Evangelicalism, in the regretful phrase of one of its best and most thoughtful observers,<sup>2</sup> 'less acceptable to persons of cultivated taste,' sealed its fate, and the third decade of the century saw revolt all along the line.

This took two forms. Whately and his followers, the Oxford 'Noetic' school, insisted on the competence of the trained understanding in matters of faith, and applied a vigorous historical criticism to the doctrinal bases of Evangelicalism. Coleridge brought to bear upon Paley's mechanical view of the world an intellect penetrated with the ideas of Kant and Schelling. The faith in an immanent God, already implicit in the *Lyrical Ballads*, entered dogmatic theology when Coleridge affirmed the

<sup>1</sup> William Wilberforce (1759-1833), *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Upper and Middle Classes, contrasted with Real Christianity*, 1797. The Emancipation Bill was carried in 1807.

<sup>2</sup> John Foster, a Baptist minister (1770-1843), *Essays*, 1805; *The Evils of Popular Ignorance*, 1819.

spirituality of human reason and will. Then, in the next generation, the mediæval revival, also heralded by Coleridge, reached theology; and while his teaching animated the rising 'Broad Church,' Noetics and Evangelicals alike lost ground before the saintly fanatics of the Oxford Movement.

In the triumphs of Evangelicalism the historian of literature, as well as the historian of thought, during this period, has but small concern. The great achievement of Clarkson and Wilberforce, honoured by a sonnet of Wordsworth's, belongs to the history of the state; the names of Simeon of Cambridge, and Dean Milner, and the founders of the 'Clapham sect,' still redolent of genial though aggressive piety, belong to the history of religious movements. But two men claim notice on a different ground, for they confessedly rank among the great preachers of England.

Robert Hall perhaps came nearer than any of his contemporaries to the political and prophetic Milton, whom Wordsworth longed to recall.

R. Hall  
(1764-1821).

A fellow-student of Mackintosh at Aberdeen, he met the first frenzy of the reaction with an *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*, which does not dishonour its prototype, the *Areopagitica*. Moments of national peril or grief called out his strength; and the sermons he preached at such crises from obscure Baptist pulpits in Cambridge or Bristol (*Reflections on War*, 1802, *Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis*, 1803, *On the Death of the Princess Charlotte*, 1819) were addressed to England, and had enough of the prophetic accent to reach their address.

Hall's weighty and close-knitted style was in sharp contrast to the loose exuberance of his younger contemporary, Thomas Chalmers.

Chalmers was an orator of undoubted genius, an administrator of great talent, an accomplished scientist, and a second-rate thinker. For thirty years, from his call to Glasgow in 1814 to his final secession as leader of the Free Kirk in 1843, he guided the destinies of theology in Scotland. The twenty-five volumes of his works are an imposing record of his various activities. His intellect had a natural grandeur, apprehended things in their largest relations, and ranged congenially among the heights and depths of the universe; it was equally remarkable for mastery of detail, and for clear concrete vision. Profoundly convinced of the adequacy of Christian creed, as he understood it, to the needs of the modern world, he took the pains to understand what these needs were. The insignificance of the Earth in modern astronomy—a source of much orthodox disquietude—became in his hands a new testimony to the sublimity of the Incarnation (*Astronomical Discourses*). The problem of poverty never ceased to occupy him, and his bold attempt in Glasgow to replace the economic methods of the Poor-law by those of the early Church was one of the rare anachronisms which have had complete success. When, twenty years later, the problem was brought nearer home, he provided the Free Kirk with the economic as well as the doctrinal basis which it still retains. Nevertheless, Carlyle was justified in calling Chalmers a man of narrow culture. He brought the obscurant Evangelicalism of his time into touch with much that it had ignored; but he had himself no understanding for the progressive movements led in his own time by Coleridge, or even Whately, both older than himself. He popularized the sublimities of science with singular power; the profounder bearing of philosophy and of history upon theology lay beyond his purview.

Coleridge marks the point at which the tide of Romanticism first met and mingled with the currents of official theology. No less devout adherent of that theology could have penetrated it so powerfully with his influence. But what was a condition of his immediate success has told fatally upon his lasting fame. Gold and clay are mingled, even more than in his political tracts, in the fragmentary records of his religious thought. In the *Aids to Reflection* (1825) a profound spiritual emotion struggles for utterance among concatenated pedantries of phrase, and the terminology of Kant is constrained to the service of Anglican orthodoxy.

The book is a passionate protest against materialism in religion; against the 'debasement of the senses' and negation of soul involved in presenting Christian dogmas as incomprehensible mysteries, to be believed on the sole evidence of miracles which had been seen, and verbally inspired texts which could be read. 'Evidences,—I am weary of the word.' To a spiritual being spiritual truths must have a meaning—this is the heart of Coleridge's religious philosophy, and the religious conscience of the nineteenth century echoes him. In working out the thesis, he is, indeed, often violent and arbitrary; that lay in the nature of the case. The Kantian 'Reason' became in his hands no mere regulative principle, but a quarry of *à priori* dogmas available forthwith for the doctrinal edifice.

The same affirmation of man's spiritual nature involved the abandonment of the mechanical theory of 'verbal inspiration,' and thus Coleridge (in the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, published 1840,) became one of the founders of the living criticism of the Bible already initiated from an historical standpoint by Whately, Thirlwall, and Arnold.

The school of Coleridge became a literary power only in the next generation. But he found nearly at the same time an ally and a disciple in two Scotsmen of otherwise unlike genius. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, a recluse thinker whose spiritual beauty of character is still enshrined in many memories, had nothing of Coleridge's intellectual range, and reached similar results by far simpler processes. His *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the truth of Revealed Religion* (1820), anticipated by five years the *Aids to Reflection*. In Scotland this vein of thought met with a more stubborn resistance than in England, where dogma, though equally tenacious, was less rigid. In his own country he remained isolated: in England he shared with Coleridge the work of forming the genius of F. D. Maurice.

Edward Irving, on the other hand, was far from anticipating Coleridge's teaching, but at length embraced it on discovery with the fanaticism and the imperfect apprehension of a late learner. Coming up from Glasgow in 1822, where for three years he had assisted Chalmers, he soon fell under the spell of the wonderful talker of Highgate. Coleridge's conversational style, 'proceeding from no premise, and advancing to no conclusion,' was better qualified to inflate than to concatenate the mind of a sympathetic hearer; and to a born rhapsodist like Irving it was a perilous experience. His *Orations* (1823) at times come as near to the rolling majesty of Milton's impassioned prose as rhetoric that rarely rings quite true well can. But the intellectual substance is of a meagreness which ill corresponds to its sumptuous clothing. He was rather a visionary than a prophet. His imagination did not so much interpret life as envelop it in a cloudy effulgence; and unable to read, like the author of *Sartor*, the 'eternal miracle of crea-

tion,' flung the glory of miracle over imposture and delusion.

In Oxford the revolt from Evangelicalism was animated by a keen scrutiny of historical facts rather than by mystical philosophy. The so-called 'Noetic School' of Whately, flourished at Oriel during the twenties, and applied a vigorous criticism to both destructive and constructive effect. Whately himself was no more a mystic than James Mill; his hard and trenchant intellect cleared away more than it rebuilt (*On the difficulty of St. Paul's Writings*, 1828).

Connop Thirlwall had already, three years before, begun his career by translating Schleiermacher's *Essay on St. Luke*, with an introduction which powerfully exposed the mechanical theory of verbal inspiration. But it was left for Arnold, through whom this school is linked with Coleridge, and Milman, to apply for the first time historical imagination to biblical subject matter, to distinguish the ethics of its different periods, to press to the human nature veiled by legend and myth. Here, however, we touch the borders of a movement which extended far beyond the domain of theology, and must be treated as a whole in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

### STUDY AND SPECULATION.

#### (3) *History.*

THE age of Wordsworth was not in England an age of great historians. Measured by its work in history, it lies like a hiatus between the brilliant epoch of Gibbon, Hume and Robertson, and that of Grote, Macaulay and Carlyle. Yet during these lean years a momentous revolution was being quietly effected in the whole method of approaching and exhibiting the past. Romanticism, with its ardent sympathies for antiquity, towards the Middle Ages, towards the East, towards all that was primitive and original, marvellous, picturesque, in any age, involved a revulsion from the philosophic complacency, the cool abstraction and detachment characteristic of the eighteenth-century historian. No school of thought in the eighteenth century developed any passion for historic study as such, though none was without some of the elements which compose the historic sense. Montesquieu analyzed the past with extraordinary penetration, but did not portray it; Voltaire portrayed it with unexampled vivacity, but on the basis of a very perfunctory analysis; Condorcet seized the nexus of the many-sided growth of man in its broad outlines, but not in detail. All three failed inevitably, like Hume and Gibbon in England, to appreciate the Catholic Middle Ages, all completely comprehended only the settled

maturity and decadence of states, not their origins or their growth. The gerra of the historic revival lay in none of these, but rather in the one school which looked with vindictive antipathy upon almost all that the past had bequeathed. Rousseau's invectives against the intrusive civilization which perverts the natural man, concealed a profound instinctive sense that human nature contains the germ of whatever man is destined to become—that man grows by development, not by aggregation. He had applied this conception, one-sidedly enough, to individual education in *Emile*. Transferred to the interpretation of national life, it became that axiom of continuity which was the most vital thought of the Romantic school of history. This further step lay, however, entirely beyond the mental reach of Rousseau. It was taken under the stimulus of a richer and deeper culture than France as yet dreamed of. In Germany the exploration of the past had been carried on by two generations of keen and laborious students; and it was there that in the early years of the century the historical school arose which first wrought out, face to face with the monuments and the records, the conception that the ultimate force in history is nationality,—the 'soul of a people' continuously bodied forth in its customs, laws, religion, language, art. To trace the evolution of the *Volkseele* through all the tangled detail of fact became then the task of the historian. And this more definite ideal furnished also a new criterion of truth. Late incrustations of legend which had satisfied all the canons of 'evidence' yielded to the solvent of an historical criticism. The fictitious unity of the *Iliad* had given way before the analysis of Wolff (1797).<sup>1</sup> The picturesque fables of ancient Rome vanished from history under the scrutiny of the profound

<sup>1</sup> Wolff, *Prolegomena*, 1797.



historical intelligence of Niebuhr (1811).<sup>1</sup> A little later, Savigny<sup>2</sup> applied the historical method with more constructive effect, but not with more constructive purpose to the Roman law (1815); and Jacob Grimm,<sup>3</sup> the incomparable founder and father of Germanic philology, gathered into that vast sympathetic imagination of his every articulation of the thousand years of German speech, and drew the first living picture of its growth (1819).

In France the historic movement took shape somewhat later, and under influences more directly literary. It was not critical scrutiny of records, but the gorgeous imagination of Chateaubriand which made Thierry a historian. As *Les Martyrs* (1809) is the first historic romance, so the *Norman Conquest* is the first history, in which race-character is felt as a ground-tone persisting through and harmonizing all individual incident. Guizot's more abstract and political intellect strove to explain the whole compass of European civilization from a few fundamental institutions. But Michelet, with more genius than either, an indefatigable explorer of the archives, and in quickening touch with German thought, told the history of his people in one of those masterpieces of creative portraiture, which are most true where they reflect most intimately the personality of the painter.

In England the specifically Romantic influence upon historic studies was tardier and more fitful than either in Germany or France. It was only in one direction, the first-hand observation of the materials of history, that England had any pretensions to lead, and that chiefly as regards those classes of material which come under the eye of the explorer and traveller. The period is still richer

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, *Römische Geschichte*, 1811.

<sup>2</sup> Savigny, *Geschichte des römischen Rechts*, 1815.

<sup>3</sup> J. Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik*, 1819.

than its predecessor in that higher kind of works of travel which is the nearest English analogue to the French Memoir—at once vividly personal and serviceable to science. E. D. Clarke, Malthus's companion on that journey of 1799 which so greatly enriched the Essay on Population, subsequently described this and later voyages in Northern and Southern Europe. Italy was described by the 'exiles' who found their 'paradise' there, and by a legion of less gifted travellers, in every accent, from the glowing letters of Shelley to the spiced anecdote of Lady Morgan.<sup>1</sup> Greece was revealed to the larger English public in the first of poetic itineraries, *Childe Harold*. Persia, the most western civilization of the East, after fascinating the public in the tinsel disguise of *Lalla Rookh*, was portrayed with admirable realism and humour in the travels and novels of Morier,<sup>2</sup> and with solid learning in the History of Sir John Malcolm.<sup>3</sup> If Italy, Hellas, and the East became more vital forces in poetry and romance in the latter half of our period, as we shall see they did, that effect came quite as much through travel and narratives of travel as through the direct influence of their literatures. In more remote regions no such literary reflexion is traceable; but Mungo Park's<sup>4</sup> heroic exploration in Central Africa, the Swiss Burckhardt's<sup>5</sup> brilliant discoveries in Egypt, the Arctic explorations of Parry,<sup>6</sup> the 'voyages of discovery' in Asia

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter V. below.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chapter V. below.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), *History of Persia*, 1815; *Sketches of Persia*, 1827.

<sup>4</sup> Mungo Park (1771-1806), *Travels*, 1799; *Journal* published 1815.

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Burckhardt (1784-1817), *Travels in Nubia*, 1819; *in Syria*, 1822; *in Arabia*, 1829.

<sup>6</sup> Sir William Edward Parry (1790-1855), the *Journals* of his three Voyages for the Discovery of the North-West Passage were published in 1821, 1824, 1826.

and America of Captain Basil Hall,<sup>1</sup> were the subject of memoirs which are still among the classics of European travel.

No English Humboldt organized this mass of rich documents of the world's history into a *Kosmos*. Comprehensive treatment of a subject most frequently took the form of presenting it in fragments. It was a day of 'Specimens' and extracts of accumulated anecdote; mediæval romance was studied in Ellis's<sup>2</sup> *Specimens*, the Elizabethan drama in Lamb's, literary history at large in D'Israeli's<sup>3</sup> gently garrulous compilations of its 'quarrels,' 'amenities,' 'calamities,' and 'curiosities.' Very slowly the sense of continuity, of totality, made headway against the predominant instinct for detached detail; while the historical criticism of which continuity was the fundamental postulate long continued to be labelled 'destructive' in uncritical circles. It was only in the thirties that Niebuhr found disciples in Hare, Thirlwall, and Thomas Arnold, and Grimm in Kemble; only in the forties, that Michelet found a rough-hewn counterpart in Carlyle. And the English mind even of that day was reflected not so much in Carlyle or Arnold as in Macaulay and Grote. The true Romantic historian of our period was Walter Scott; and even Scott lost half his power of vitalizing the

<sup>1</sup> Basil Hall (1788-1844), *Voyage of Discovery to Corea*, 1818; *Journal written on the coast of Chili, Peru, and Mexico*, 1823.

<sup>2</sup> George Ellis (1753-1815), part author of the *Anti-Jacobin*, then a friend for life of Scott, published his *Specimens of Early English Romances* in 1805.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848), *Curiosities of Literature* (1791), *Calamities of Authors* (1812), *Quarrels of Authors* (1814), *Amenities of Literature* (1814). An equally miscellaneous, but more aggressive and effusive critic and biographer, was Sir Egerton Brydges (1762-1837), whose *Censura Literaria*, in ten volumes, appeared from 1805-9.

past when he sat down formally to record it—when he turned from his marvellous recreation of James I. to give a laboured but very ordinary portrait of Napoleon. It is only in the *direction* of historic study that the tendencies of the new historic schools were plainly shared by England. To pass from Hume to Sharon Turner, from Robertson to Hallam and Lingard, is to enter a world in which the obscure beginnings and early growth of civilization have acquired a quite other value for the historian.

The oldest stratum of histories published during our period still belongs to the generation of Hume and Robertson.

William Mitford was a Tory squire, Member of Parliament, and colonel of Hampshire Militia. It was at the suggestion of his fellow officer, Gibbon, that he undertook to write the history of Greece, a task for which his qualifications were a lively idiomatic style, a sufficiency of such Greek as Oxford then dispensed, a pronounced antipathy to democratic government, and a total absence of the historical sense. The history was published in leisurely instalments, from 1784 to 1818, and held for a generation the rank of a classic. Mitford's energetic partisanship, which finds a solution for every doubt, gives an engaging clearness and decision to his work, and it has been tenderly treated by men of letters. Byron praised his 'wrath and partiality,' and roundly declared him to be 'perhaps the best of all modern historians whatsoever.' Of Gibbon's ironical reserve he has nothing; his excellence lies on the contrary in frank directness and straightforward vigour. In the greater virtues of the historian—in comprehensive understanding, in penetrative imagination—he is gravely deficient. Grote's great work, which he had the merit of provoking, was no mere counterblast from the opposite side in politics; partisan as it is, and injured as it is by its partisanship, it shows a many-

sided intimacy with Greek life and culture which Mitford was far from approaching, and of which his lively intelligence only fitfully supplied the place. In wealth of material and breadth of base, if not entirely in method, Grote's work fairly measures the immense advance in historic studies which the intervening half century had brought with it.

Archdeacon William Coxe's *History of the House of Austria* is greater in design than execution. Inspired by the ruins of Schloss Habsburg, he tells us, as Gibbon had been by the ruins of the Forum, he worked out his plan with an industry quite unmingled with genius in the archives of Vienna, which he was probably the first Englishman to explore. It was followed by *Memoirs of the Kings of Spain of the House of Bourbon* (1813). Coxe published also a series of memoirs of Englishmen—the Walpoles, Stillingfleet, and Marlborough,—which are still valuable as material.

Mitford is superseded and Coxe forgotten, but a faint classical glamour still clings to the name of William Roscoe—the first distinguished member of a Liverpool family which has retained distinction. Of humble origin, he acquired wealth as a banker, and used it with equal liberality for the ends of humanity and of humanism in promoting freedom and accumulating choice collections of books and pictures. To a man of such tastes the brilliant development of art and letters in another great civic community was naturally congenial, and his *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1796) has the excellences and the faults of work done upon a congenial subject by an enlightened but untrained man. Its sequel, *The Life of Leo X.* (1805), required a larger canvas, and gave more evidence of the historian's limitations. He still moves with an air of accomplished ease among the scholars and artists, and digests in lucid paragraphs un-

W. Coxe  
(1747-1828).

W. Roscoe  
(1753-1831).

familiar material from Italian archives. But he is too typical an example of the highly cultured Unitarianism of his time to enter as sympathetically into religious passions and fanaticisms as he does into art and learning; and while he draws Luther with tolerable skill from the outside, Savonarola is to him somewhat as Mohammed to Voltaire.

A second stratum of histories, though still largely coloured by eighteenth-century modes of thinking and by the manner of Gibbon, show a curiosity quite alien to the first into 'origins.' Much of the minor historical as well as the philosophic activity of the generation following Hume, especially in Scotland, had taken the form of providing antidotes to his unwelcome conclusions. Of more importance was the active investigation of the Anglo-Saxon epoch which he had ignored. Literary and theological interests added their stimulus. The publication in 1815 of *Beowulf*, re-discovered by the Dane Thorkelin, first made known to scholars the oldest epic of the Germanic peoples. The Anglo-Saxon Church, once explored for weapons against Rome by the early Reformers, likewise repaid the closer scrutiny of the Catholic Lingard. The most considerable

worker in this field was Sharon Turner. His *History of the Anglo-Saxons* contains a mass of valuable matter, handled with genuine and at times imposing power, though emulating rather too obviously the large evolution of the *Decline and Fall*, and catching the pomp without the splendour of Gibbon's style. He subsequently carried on the history to the reign of Elizabeth, but this part of his work was soon obscured by Lingard, while his Anglo-Saxon labours retained prestige until superseded by Kemble and Thorpe, who built upon the broader foundation of the school of Grimm.

John Lingard, the son of poor parents, was trained at Douay (1782-93), escaped at the Revolution, and, after taking part for some years in the Catholic training colleges at Crookhall and Ushaw, settled in 1811 at Hornby, one of those scattered villages of the Lancashire and Yorkshire border where the faith of that once Catholic region still lingers. Here the remaining forty years of his life were spent. His first treatise, already mentioned, was followed in 1819 by the first instalment of his *History of England*, finally continued to the Revolution. Writing for a hostile audience whom he wished to convince and not to irritate, Lingard had the strongest motive to avoid a fanaticism which his personal experiences might have made excusable. The anger of extremists on both sides—ultra-Protestant reviewers in the *Edinburgh*, ultra-papal ecclesiastics at Rome—fairly vindicated the claims of the history to be the work of a historian. And, though inevitably in part superseded, its reputation has rather advanced than declined.

Thus the historic spirit found a shrine in the inmost temple of fanaticism. Even in the perilous field of Scottish history, the hot partisan works of M'Crie (*Life of Knox*) and Malcolm Laing (1762-1818: *History of Scotland from James VI. to the Union*, 1800) were followed, at the close of our period (1828) by the sound and temperate *History of Scotland* (to 1603) of Patrick Fraser Tytler (1791-1849).

If Lingard strove to be judicial, the judicial temper was native and supreme in Henry Hallam. Leisured and well-to-do, a ripe scholar, an accomplished lawyer, a friend and confidant of statesmen but never actively entering the arena of politics, Hallam had peculiar qualifications for that union of vast and minute antiquarian erudition with political insight for which two of his three famous treatises have

J. Lingard  
(1771-1851).

H. Hallam  
(1778-1859).

made his name a synonym. *The View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818) is a masterpiece, as remarkable in its very different and entirely English way as Guizot's treatment of the same theme in the *History of European Civilization* ten years later. *The Constitutional History of England* (1827) detached the legislative from the merely military development of the country in a way very characteristic of the temper of the years between Waterloo and the Reform Bill. *The Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1837), executed under the burden of declining years and of repeated bereavement, is less admirable; partly because the task was hardly within one man's competence, partly because Hallam's critical instinct in literature, though wide and various, had rigid limits in the direction of passion and romance, and without these no man may describe the poetry of the sixteenth century. Hallam represents, better perhaps than any other, the English intellect of the epoch in which the eighteenth century was passing into the nineteenth, when the age of 'common-sense' was discredited but not extinct, and Romanticism was in the air, but not in the blood.

Contemporary history rarely produces its Thucydides, and the colossal struggle of our period found, as a whole, no adequate recorder. Scott's and Hazlitt's lives of *Napoleon*, Southey's *History of the Peninsular War*, were subordinate works of men who had done better work in other fields. But Sir W. Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* (1828-40) is one of the rare masterpieces in modern military history.

One of a family of soldiers, he was at no time merely a soldier. Ordered to Spain in 1808, he took an honourable part in several of the actions he describes, and stood in close relations to his fellow-countryman, Wellington. Retiring

W. F. P. Napier  
(1785-1860).



in 1819, he painted and carved, and then, with the active encouragement of Wellington, settled down to the composition of his memorable history. Chivalrous championship of his brother Charles, who had fought by his side in Spain, provoked his history of the *Conquest of Scinde* (1844-46), and the *History of the Administration of Scinde* (1851). Like all who have helped to make the history they tell, Napier was hotly attacked for partiality, and his democratic opinions added the antagonism of party warfare to the rancour of wounded vanity. But posterity has recognized the admirable fairness which counterpoises his Celtic *verve*, and France, as well as England, paid tribute to a book which did equal honour to the heroes of both sides, and admitted the horrors of the English sack of San Sebastian, with a note like the following (vi. 214): 'If the Spanish declarations on this occasion are not to be heeded, four-fifths of the excesses attributed to the French must be effaced as resting on a like foundation.'

So far we have been concerned with historians who may be broadly said to continue methods of the eighteenth-century school, in a wider range of subject. Two remain, who in different ways broke with that tradition.

James Mill's *History of British India* (1818), has interest, and even piquancy, for the literary historian, as the first, and with Grote's masterpiece the only, achievement in history of a school naturally, and in Mill's case, it must be said, fatally, alien from the historical point of view. The single nexus between the Philosophical Radicals and historical study was its bearing on practical politics. The history of Athens was an object-lesson in the life of a democracy. The history of India was a necessary study for the English citizen who had to govern her. Mill's enterprise was occasioned by the embarrassment with which, in the course

J. Mill  
(1773-1836).

of his studies of his country's 'people, government, interests, policy, and laws,' he approached this untrodden region. His disabilities were grave. He had never been in India; he knew no Indian language. He shows his entire divergence from the Romantic school of history by making light of both facts. To enter into the genius of a strange civilization and judge it in the light of its own aims and aspirations was no business of his: he desired to bring it to the bar of his own trained and peremptory judgment, and try it by the grand test of civilization'—utility. The historian has with him not only to judge, but to give his reasons at length, which he does with an amplitude reproduced by Grote, rudely ignoring in this and other respects the artistic presentment of history made current by Voltaire and Montesquieu. Yet his account of Hindoo civilization, though bitterly contemptuous, is in tendency a wholesome corrective to the uncritical rhapsodies of the early Sanscritists—of Sir W. Jones and F. Schlegel; and the entire exemption from vulgar patriotism which prompts his incisive criticisms of the Company, was a most salutary application of Bentham's mechanical formula: everyone to count as one, and no one for more than one. As history, nevertheless, Mill's history must be pronounced to have chiefly a pathological interest.

As Mill was in aim though not in scholarship a precursor of Grote, so Henry Hart Milman, H. H. Milman (1791-1868), who as a whole belongs to the next period, directly announced Arnold, and sounded a faint and decorous prelude to Carlyle. He had already essayed the imaginative presentment of Jewish and early Christian legend in several dramatic poems of much literary beauty,<sup>1</sup> on the strength of which, and of *Fazio* (1815), he

<sup>1</sup> *Samor*, 1818; *The Fall of Jerusalem*, 1820; *The Martyr of Antioch*, and *Belshazzar*, 1822.

was compared by the reviewers to Byron, and made professor of poetry at Oxford (1821), when, in 1829, he issued his *History of the Jews*. The *History of Christianity under the Empire* (1840) followed, finally carried on in the *History of Latin Christianity* (1855). In the first of these works and to some extent in its successors, Milman provoked much theological animosity by a very mild and partial application of the historic method to a region of history which had hitherto remained peculiarly exempt from it. He brings biblical history into relation with oriental ethnology, and invokes peculiarities of national character and temperament, dissensions in the early Church, and 'the mythical and imaginative spirit of the early Christians,' to explain the evolution of dogma. The word imagination is indeed, significantly enough, for ever on his lips; he is the first English theologian who betrayed in any marked degree the influence of the Romantic conception of myth as a spontaneous imaginative growth. Yet the *Halbheit* which characterizes Milman throughout his work prevented him from giving these fruitful ideas full scope; and in spite of his fine sympathetic insight, accomplished scholarship, and wide and deep learning, he belongs to the class, so frequent in the history of English culture, of those who but half apprehend the meaning and tendency of their own work. He climbed Pisgah, but in the clouds.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CRITICS AND THE ESSAYISTS.

ROMANTICISM stands alone among literary movements in having exercised an equal and similar, though not identical, transforming power upon verse and prose. The heightened imagination and finer sensibility to beauty from which it sprang could not but react powerfully upon a language so rich in unused faculty and neglected tradition as the English prose of the expiring eighteenth century. Burke alone, of the writers of that century, had in any degree heralded the Romantic prose; and even he hardly prophesied of the humour and the pathos, the quaint and the visionary fancy which this prose so vividly embodies in the hands of Lamb or De Quincey.

The most remarkable achievement of Romantic prose was in providing the formal vesture of Romantic *criticism*. In the hands of Hazlitt, Lamb, Coleridge, to a less degree in those of Hunt and De Quincey, the art of literary appreciation underwent a development so extraordinary and so sudden, that it may fairly be called a Renaissance. It is true that in the babel of critical voices in the early decades of the century, the most strident and resonant notes were not those of the Romantic critics. But the authoritative blasts of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, which seemed to proclaim a new era in criticism, were, in reality, the last blatant flourish of one gone by. For many years the

Romantics reached only a small and provincial circle. Wordsworth's *Preface* stole upon the public in an obscure and decried volume; Lamb scattered his luminous and subtle intuitions in talk and private letters. Yet a revolution was silently proceeding in the code of æsthetic morality called *taste*. Certain elements of Romantic feeling were even at the outset of the period extremely vigorous. The sense for Gothic architecture—from Goethe<sup>1</sup> to Ruskin<sup>2</sup> a touchstone of Romantic taste—was promoted by the churches of Pugin. The sentiment of the bygone, traded on by the romances of the Minerva Press, was deepened as well as immensely diffused by the verse-tales of Scott. The cult of the 'Picturesque'—or the romantic quality in Nature—led by the landscape descriptions of Gilpin, was formulated in the remarkable Essays of Sir Uvedale Price,<sup>3</sup> and caricatured in the first 'Tour' of Dr. Syntax.<sup>4</sup> About 1820 Romantic criticism began to gain the upper hand: the essays of Hazlitt and Lamb, the lectures of Hazlitt and Coleridge, told in substantially the same direction, the newly founded *London Magazine*, and *Blackwood* in the hands of Wilson and De Quincey, became potent auxiliaries,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Goethe's profound and suggestive little essay, *Von deutscher Baukunst*, 1770.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the chapter 'On the Nature of Gothic Architecture' in *Stones of Venice*.

<sup>3</sup> Sir U. Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1794-1798. Price applies his ideas primarily to landscape gardening, but they have obvious literary analogies. He warmly assails the classical symmetry of the 'dressed' walks and 'made water' of the artificial garden of the Brown school. He is all for variety and surprise—special virtues in all Romantic æsthetics.

<sup>4</sup> William Combe (b. 1741), produced his *Three Tours of Dr. Syntax* at the end of a long career of political satire. The Tour 'In search of the Picturesque' first appeared in 1810.

and before the end of the third decade Jeffrey himself had admitted into the *Edinburgh* the early essays of Carlyle.

Yet the English Romantic critics did not form a school. Like everything else in the English Romantic movement, its criticism was individual, isolated, sporadic, unsystematized. It had no official mouthpiece like Ste.-Beuve and the *Globe*; its members formed no compact phalanx like that which towards the close of our period threw itself upon the 'classiques' of Paris. Nor did they, with the one exception of Coleridge, approach the Romantic critics of Germany in range of ideas, in grasp of the larger significance of their own movement. It was only in Germany that the ideas implicit in the great poetic revival were explicitly thought out in all their many-sided bearing upon society, history, philosophy, religion, and that the problem of criticism in particular was presented in its full depth and richness of meaning. So to present it involved nothing less than all philosophy, and Romantic criticism found its true culmination in the vast constructions of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

As English Romanticism achieved greater things on its creative than on its critical side, so its criticism was more remarkable on that side which is akin to creation—in the subtle appreciation of literary quality—than in the analysis of the principles on which its appreciation was founded. Those who, like Coleridge and Carlyle, most adequately grasped the principles of criticism were, as critics, most fitful, fragmentary, and unequal; others, like Lamb, De Quincey, Wilson, Hunt, whose appreciative organ was most delicate, are hardly to be mentioned as thinkers about criticism. Hazlitt, more than any other had the peculiar excellences of both classes.

What all these men had in common was a conviction, instinctive or explicit, of the supreme worth of Imagination.

Wordsworth was the first definitely to claim for imaginative vision an inner veracity, a power of seeing into the life of things, not attainable by any other means. From this it was an easy step—though Wordsworth hardly took it—to the view that the criticism of poetry, like poetry itself, must be an act of imagination. Lamb, the least speculative of the critics, scarcely formulated his creed further than this. But the full justification of this view of criticism involved a profounder answer than had yet been given to the questions: what is poetry, and what is the relation of poetry to life in general? Hazlitt attempted an answer when, in the Introduction to his Lectures on the Poets, he declared poetry to exist in the soul of every man, to be ‘the stuff of which our life is made.’ But Hazlitt in practice limited poetry to a somewhat narrow domain of history; to a far greater degree than Lamb he was an antiquarian in criticism, absolute and perverse as Jeffrey in his dealings with his own contemporaries, only that he measured them by the Elizabethans instead of by Pope. Rousseau and Young had foreshadowed, Coleridge and Carlyle definitely formulated the historical method in criticism, with its attribute of catholic sympathy, by conceiving poetry as a manifestation of the historic evolution of the divine spirit of the universe under the ‘vesture’ of national, local, and personal conditions, inexhaustibly various. Every true poem was thence by its very nature original: it presented universal truth under an absolutely individual form. It must therefore be judged, not by any external standard, but by the laws of the ‘situation’ from which it springs; and this can only be done when the critic imaginatively re-creates it in his mind, thinking the poet’s thought after him, sympathetically entering into the whole process of its growth. It is the significance of the Romantic criticism therefore to have substituted for the absolute

method of judging by reference to an external standard of 'taste,' a method at once imaginative and historical.

In the following survey we shall trace the gradual approach to the culminating point just indicated, starting from the opposite pole of critical thought as represented in the great quarterlies.

Francis Jeffrey, born in Edinburgh, was called to the bar there in 1794, but had won distinction neither in law nor in literature when, in 1802, he, with Sydney Smith, Brougham, and Horner, held, furtively, the historic meeting at which the first-named projected the *Edinburgh Review*. Jeffrey, according to his own statement, wrote the first article in the first number (October, 1802), and from 1803 until his retirement in 1829 was sole editor. Under his control, the *Review* was not at first decisively political; but a temperament naturally despondent deepened his repugnance to the war, and, in 1808, his hostile criticism of the English enterprise in Spain revolted the Tories, and led to the foundation of the *Quarterly*. During his conduct of the *Edinburgh* his professional prestige grew rapidly, and in 1829 he was chosen Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, the Tory majority waiving their power of opposition. He entered parliament in 1830, but finally retired as a judge of the Court of Sessions in 1834.

Jeffrey was before all things a literary critic, and, within the limits of his discernment, one of the acutest and liveliest of his time. His point of view was that of refined but positive commonsense, qualified by a rooted distrust of innovation. To the simple and obvious poetry of Rogers, Campbell, Crabbe, he brought a keen if somewhat excessive appreciation; mawkish sentiment and pseudo-mediævalism he exposed with signal effect. We cannot now wholly disapprove of the strictures upon *Marmion* which



angered Scott, nor share his effusive penitence for those upon Byron's *Hours of Idleness*. But he was, unfortunately, as proof against the true Romantics as against the false, and comprehended the mysticism of imaginative poetry in the same anathema with the crude supernaturalism of the school of horrors. The manifesto against the 'Lake school' with which he opened the review is one of the most striking examples in literature of the fatuous efforts of a clever man to interpret a larger world than his own. The naked simplicity of Wordsworth, the tumultuous energy of Coleridge, the irregular metres of Southey were equally offensive to him, and he classed them together, as if all innovators formed one brotherhood, wildly accusing them of a joint discipleship to Rousseau, Donne, Quarles, Cowper, and Ambrose Phillips. Later Romantics he treated with less prejudice if not with greater insight, but political sympathy was partly responsible for this, and the critic who 'could not advise the author of *Hyperion* to complete it' was only in courtesy much above the *Blackwood* critic, who recommended him to return to his gallipots. In all this Jeffrey honestly believed that he was appealing to 'the standard of eternal truth and nature;' but this he declared to be something 'which everyone is knowing enough to recognize.' 'Nature' with him was fixed and finite, and intuitively known to all sensible persons. That anything in nature revealed itself only to the imaginative vision of the poet he suspected as little as that poetry could have any other standards than those 'fixed long ago by certain inspired writers whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question.' Hence he never dreamed of *studying* the poets he reviewed; sympathetically to appreciate their aims and standpoint would have been in his view to corrupt the judgment, not to illuminate it. He mediates between genius and the plain man by putting himself unreservedly

at the plain man's point of view, and fortifying the 'This will never do' of untaught instinct. His demand for 'eternal truth and nature' continually became therefore a demand for the conventional, and he habitually missed those pathways to eternal truth which lie through the commonplace, or even through an atmosphere of strangeness investing things in themselves common. Wordsworth's children who whistled to owls through their fingers, his lover who rides by moonlight to his mistress and then cries, 'O mercy, if Lucy should be dead,' merely provoked him, and he caustically contrasts Crabbe's pictures of the common people of England *as they are*, with Wordsworth's 'eloquent and refined analysis of his own capricious feelings' about them.

The most brilliant of Jeffrey's original coadjutors belonged in an even higher degree to the school of accomplished good sense, for he perfectly understood its limits, and was as felicitous in choosing his topics as in treating them.

Sydney Smith, a curate near Salisbury, was about to embark as a private tutor for 'the University of Weimar,' when the outbreak of war in Germany checked that unpromising quest, and turned his course to Edinburgh. Jokes, erudition, and vigorous Whig politics rapidly commended him to the like-minded society of the founders of the *Edinburgh*; and, according to his own account (in some points romantic), it was the English visitor who first suggested the great Scottish *Review*. After editing the first number he left Edinburgh for London, and immediately fascinated society by sermons in which the wit and the man of the world were rather subdued than suppressed by the divine. In 1809 he exchanged London for a small living at Foston-le-Clay in Yorkshire. Here, until 1828, when he was made a canon of Bristol, he contributed constantly to the *Review*, and the

S. Smith  
(1771-1845).

Tory supremacy of those years had no more formidable assailant than his English shrewdness and sense of justice armed with his Gallic wit. Game-laws, poor-laws, the sufferings of untried prisoners, the still flourishing legislation against catholics and dissenters, were handled by him with an unsurpassed faculty of displaying the ludicrous aspect of a bad cause. Literary criticism, however, was little in his way, and his rare reviews of novels or memoirs were hardly more than selections of effective extracts, interspersed with lively annotations. Nor had he, with all his incomparable command of ludicrous detail, either the imagination or the grasp of large issues, which makes the great satirist. He was English to the core in his overmastering instinct for the matter of fact. His best work was done in promoting definite practical ends, and his wit in its airiest gambols never escaped his control. He did not write to entertain, but because he had strong opinions. Few men of letters of his standing have had less of the foppery of the literary man. The merest film of fictitious invention distinguishes his most remarkable single work, the *Letters of Peter Plymley* (1808), from the letters written in his own name to Archdeacon Singleton twenty-eight years later. Both series belong to the highest rank of controversial literature. Catholic Emancipation may be ancient history now, but the spirit which opposed it is sufficiently vigorous to make the armed jests of *Peter Plymley* still piquant. In attacking the injudicious reforms of the Ecclesiastical Commission he had, as a reformer, a less grateful task; and his lively appreciation of the secular elements in human welfare is less attractive in the guise of a keen concern for clerical incomes than when it appeared as indignation at clerical aggression. Yet his wit triumphs completely over the reluctant material. A contemporary of Wordsworth and Scott, Sydney Smith

had no tincture of mysticism or of romance; he prolonged the century of Johnson with its matter of fact common-sense; but if the spirit was Johnson's, it spoke with the lips and with the courage of Voltaire.

William Gifford was the lifelong and uncompromising enemy of Romanticism. Of humble birth, he won his way by indomitable industry to such a knowledge of the Latin classics as procured him the gift of a university education. He was nearly forty when he crushed the sham Romanticism of the Dellacruscans with the mimic Juvenalian invective of the *Baviad* and the *Maeviad* (1794-95). This success, and the most inflexible Toryism in politics, marked him out for the editorship successively of the *Anti-Jacobin*, and then (1809) of the *Quarterly Review*. The latter organ, under his guidance, became not only a successful rival of the *Edinburgh*, but its counterpart in all essential points of critical method. Gifford did not apply his personal canons of taste with more serene assurance than Jeffrey to the most original poets of his time; but he was a duller man, and with all his classic zeal lacked Roman urbanity as conspicuously as Romantic imagination. Before the end of his editorship he had committed sins of blind rancour against the new poetry and the new prose which modern criticism justly finds unpardonable, and which raised up more than one avenger with a voice more resonant than his own. Lamb, whom we are surprised to find among his contributors, had to complain of the mutilation (and we, alas, of the loss) of his exquisite prose; Hazlitt retorted upon his brutalities with relentless acrimony in the *Letter to William Gifford*, and with even more effective irony in the *Spirit of the Age*; Shelley avenged the savage review of *Endymion* with the *Adonais*. Even the *Waverley Novels* found only grudging recognition at his hands. In the presence of

almost all that was great and prophetic in the literature of his time, Gifford was purely futile or mischievous; but his bludgeon fell at times upon weeds or reptiles, and he performed on two occasions memorable services to letters; first with his Dellacruscan satires, and then with the sterling edition of Ben Jonson (1816), which once for all vindicated that great writer from the jealousy of Shakespeare-commentators. He essayed lyric verse, but the 'wild strains,' as he calls them, to Anna are flat enough.

In 1825 Gifford was succeeded in the editorial chair of the *Quarterly* by a man of far finer gifts, but, as J. G. Lockhart (1794-1854). a critic of Romanticism, only in one direction appreciably more enlightened than himself.

John Gibson Lockhart belongs to our period, not as the biographer of Scott, but as the 'scorpion' chief of the Tory wits of Edinburgh, whose genius for satire and mystification gave *Blackwood's* its first scandalous success. The story of the foundation (1817) and early career of *Blackwood's* is a highly amusing chapter of literary biography, but may be lightly passed over in a history of literature. It combined the attractions of prose criticism more slashing and reckless than that of the *Edinburgh*, of burlesques which recall the *Anti-Jacobin*, and of a whole gallery of veiled or imaginary portraits which had but a faint and decorous precursor in the *Spectator*. In all the most piquant *jeux d'esprit* Lockhart had either, in Heywood's phrase, an entire hand or at least a main finger; and they have the merit which his keen and nervous wit impressed upon everything he wrote. *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819), a series of caustic sketches of Edinburgh society, illustrates also his first intimacy with Scott, in the narrative, full of delicate appreciation, of the mythic 'Dr. Morris' visit to Abbotsford. Scott had published his own vivid correspondence from the Continent in 1815 as the *Letters*

of Paul to his Kinsfolk. A more serious but not less fictitious invention, the 'cockney school of poetry,' was largely worked out by Lockhart; and he cannot be acquitted of something worse than critical savagery in his treatment of Keats and Leigh Hunt. His translations of the *Ancient Spanish Ballads*, published in *Blackwood's*, 1822, are spirited without reaching high lyric quality. In 1828 he entered upon the field of his enduring fame with the *Life of Burns*, certainly the ablest of the then existing lives, yet now chiefly memorable as having given occasion to the noble essay in which Carlyle uttered, as has been finely said, 'the very voice of Scotland, expressive of all her passionate love and tragic sorrow for her darling son.' Ten years later their position was inverted, when Lockhart's immortal biography of the one man for whom he had profound and sympathetic understanding was reviewed by the critic of all others most sensitive to Scott's chief defect. Both encounters illustrate the contrast between the criticism of absolute standards and that of imaginative appreciation, to which we now turn; though in the case of Scott it was Carlyle, the great formulator of the new criticism, who played the part of Jeffrey or Gifford, and Lockhart who attained for once the penetrating sympathy of the Romantics.

Wordsworth and Coleridge had one advantage rarely enjoyed by poets of much originality—the presence, in their own generation and in their own circle, of a critic capable of interpreting them with the most delicate sympathy. Such was Charles Lamb. Several years their junior, he played the critical mentor to both with almost unerring sureness of taste, did battle with Coleridge's elaborateness and Wordsworth's baldness, declared the *Tintern Abbey* and the *Ancient Mariner* great poems when the one was ignored and the other universally decried. But Lamb was a discoverer as

C. Lamb  
(1775-1834).

well as an interpreter. If the higher criticism of Shakespeare owes more to Coleridge, Lamb first revealed the poetic wealth of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama at large. And he had a poetry of his own, wholly distinct from that of either of his friends, though allied to both: the poetry of great cities, which Wordsworth did not know, the poetry of the local, from which Coleridge's 'thirst for the absolute' perpetually estranged him. In spiritual beauty of character neither they nor any other, save Shelley, of his greater contemporaries approached him. The tragic horror of fear and memory which underlay his life, and the exquisite wit and humour which irradiated its surface, were his alone. Born in February, 1775, in a humble attic of the Temple, Charles Lamb grew up among the sombre old-world gardens and courts, and became their lifelong lover. At Christ's Hospital he acquired enough Latin to become in after days a devoted reader of old folios and a perpetrator of the choicest bad Latin puns. Coleridge was his schoolfellow, and here the foundation of their lifelong friendship was laid. Their ways at first lay far apart. Unable to go to the university, Lamb entered at fourteen on that long career of office drudgery of which his *Essays* embalm immortal reminiscences. For more than thirty years he paced Fleet Street to and fro, looked up at St. Paul's with daily reverence, and turned the mud and dross of London pavements into pure gold with the alchemy of a mind that 'loved to be at home in crowds.' Almost throughout life his means were narrow; and the crowd of brilliant friends who made his homely chambers in later years the very focus and heart of English letters, did not begin to assemble there before the new century; most of them were until then as obscure as himself. For some years he lived a lonely life, stimulated and sustained by the rich friendship of Coleridge alone. Long afterwards he bore witness, in

famous words, to their memorable meetings at the *Cat and Salutation* in Newgate Street, 'when life was fresh and topics exhaustless,' and when Coleridge first awakened in him 'if not the power, yet the love of poetry and beauty and kindliness.' In 1796, when Coleridge seemed to have settled in the west, a correspondence between them began, in which Lamb gradually passed from the worshipping disciple to the critic upon equal terms. In other ways the year 1796 was one of terrible moment in a life otherwise, outwardly, so uneventful. A brief unhappy love affair brought on, as he hints, a temporary unhinging of his reason; and he had not been many months released from 'the madhouse at Hoxton' when his sister, in a similar paroxysm, took their mother's life. This determined the whole course of Lamb's future. He became henceforth his sister's guardian, supporter and nurse, and their beautiful lifelong companionship was founded upon his cheerful sacrifice of any other. Before this crisis he had already begun to write verse. His early taste was altogether for the simple and natural. He loved the 'divine chit-chat of Cowper,' the unassuming strength of Burns, the plaintive tenderness of Bowles, the gracious ease and abandon of Fletcher. A few of his sonnets, redolent chiefly of Bowles, with a suspicion of archaism, were published by Coleridge in his first volume (1796). In the second edition, of 1797 some other pieces of Lamb's were added, with several by Coleridge's other, more metaphysical than poetic, disciple, Charles Lloyd; a conjunction which in the following year had the ludicrous result of implicating Lloyd and Lamb in the unscrupulous invective which the *Anti-Jacobin* discharged against the quondam Revolutionary poets, Coleridge and Southey. Even invective, however, did not attract any attention to the work of Lloyd and Lamb, now (1798) published in a separate



volume, which included for the first time Lamb's happy inspiration, *The Old Familiar Faces*. A certain vogue was obtained, however, by his tale of *Rosamund Gray* in the same year. It is crude and formless, the raw elements of a story clumsily thrust into a common frame. The idyllic picture of Rosamund and her grandmother (embalming probably a memory of his Anna Simmons) has charm; but the horrible fate of the young girl is a jarring dissonance, sudden and arbitrary as the invading shock of madness in which that early love had issued. The *Lyrical Ballads*, of the same autumn, found in Lamb (who with his sister had visited the two poets at Stowey) an admiring but discriminating critic. His comments show how far he was from being the poet of 'meek simplicity' with which Coleridge was too apt to identify his 'gentle-hearted Charles.' While cordially appreciating Wordsworth's richer strains, he felt and expressed a yet keener delight at the wild witchery of *The Ancient Mariner*. Already in 1796 he had read Bürger's *Lenore* with rapture in a translation ('Have you read the Ballad called *Leonora* in the *New Monthly Magazine*? If you have!!!!'—To Coleridge, July, 1796). But he found his chief and most congenial nutriment in the Jacobean dramatists. Here was imaginative daring, here was passion, here was what he at bottom meant when he exhorted Coleridge to cultivate 'simplicity'—the heartfelt spontaneity which 'carries into daylight its own . . . genuine sweet and clear flowers of expression' (to Coleridge, Nov. 8th, 1796). The firstfruits of these studies was his drama of *John Woodvil* (published 1801)—a piece almost as wanting in structure and plot as *Rosamund Gray*, but breathing from its imperfect profiles a fine fragrance of Elizabethan manner. The forest retreat of the elder Woodvil and his friends, under the menace of the restored King Charles, faintly recalls that of the banished

duke in Arden; and Margaret, his ward, who goes forth to seek him in boy's apparel, is a staid and shadowy Rosalind. The plot turns upon a single incident. John Woodvil, carousing with a company of cavaliers, betrays his father's retreat; thence follows their discovery, the aged Woodvil dies, and Woodvil is overcome with remorse. The piece altogether lacks material, whether tragic or comic. But it has many fine lines, and one passage steeped in the richest glow of Jacobean fancy—that description of the forest life (in Act II.) which haunted the memory of the unromantic Godwin as an undiscoverable quotation from some old drama.

With Godwin he had been familiar from 1800. In December of that year he wrote the prologue for 'the Professor's' disastrous tragedy *Antonio*; and Godwin was thenceforth a frequent visitor, prone to vary 'long barren silence' with the enunciation of incredible paradoxes.

The friendship seemed odd; but Lamb had caught from Coleridge a tincture of speculation, and even solemnly thanked him, 'as a Necessarian,' for the *Religious Musings*; while Godwin, on his part, was just at this moment abandoning atheism for a shadowy reflection of Coleridge's Unitarian creed. Lamb's intimacy probably encouraged Godwin in those antiquarian pursuits which presently bore solid fruit in his *Life of Chaucer* (1803); and a little later, when the dangerous revolutionary had become a publisher of children's books, Charles and Mary Lamb undertook, at Godwin's request, the well-known *Tales from Shakespeare*, he doing the tragedies, she the comedies (1807). This humble but charmingly executed task led to one of more moment. Lamb was invited to edit a volume of *Specimens* (1808) from the old dramatists, a task for which no living Englishman had comparable qualifications. It was, as has been said, a day of specimens. The literary public was

alive to the existence of a mass of forgotten literature, and readily accepted a skilfully executed *résumé* of its choicest contents. What Scott and Ellis had done five or six years before for the Border ballads and the Middle English Romances, Lamb was now to do for the neglected glories of the early drama. His privilege was greater than theirs, and asked a finer critical gift. He had not, like Scott, to hunt down his material through days of joyous privation among the wilds of Ettrick and Yarrow; but he had to choose out the decisive poetry from several hundred plays of some thirty authors. Even Scott is not more one in spirit with his ballads than Lamb is with his plays. His brief critical notes are not, like Ellis's accomplished prose commentary, a heterogeneous setting in which his extracts are inlaid, but the inmost breath and genius of the poetry itself captured and made palpable in words. These notes are written, as Tieck said, from Lamb's heart: few criticisms are at once so human and inspired by so subtle a sense of literary art. He contrasts with the sentimental delicacy of the modern stage the 'honest boldness' of the old playwrights. 'If a reverse of fortune be the thing to be personified, they fairly bring us to the prison grate and the alms-basket. A poor man on our stage is always a gentleman. He may be known by a peculiar neatness of apparel, and by wearing black.' And he inveighs indignantly against the 'insipid levelling morality,' the 'stupid infantile goodness' with which the modern stage replaced 'the vigorous passions and virtues clad in flesh and blood' of the old dramatists. 'Those noble and liberal casuists could discern in the differences, the animosities of men, a beauty and truth of moral feeling, no less than in the iterately inculcated duties of forgiveness and atonement.' But it was in the name of imaginative freedom, not of vulgar realism, that he raised this protest.

To the gross realistic witches of Middleton he opposes with even exaggerated scorn the unearthly creations of Shakespeare—'foul anomalies of whom we know not either whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending.' Lamb, the purest spirit among the critics of his time, is the furthest from prudishness. Coleridge's comments on Beaumont and Fletcher are a string of cavils at their loose language: Lamb fearlessly touches the repelling story of Ford's *'Tis Pity*, and declares its author to be 'of the first order of poets.' He handled evil things with the freedom and boldness of the perfectly pure in heart. We see already the Elia who was one day to defend the comedy of the Restoration as a romantic creation, an imaginary world in which there was no moral law to be violated, and therefore no vice.

The *Specimens* were followed by a series of more continuous papers on literature and on art. His fine gift as a critic of painting was stimulated by his friendship (from 1804) with William Hazlitt, just then reluctantly resigning the pencil for the pen. And a later acquaintance, the young Radical journalist, Leigh Hunt, provided a ready opening for Lamb's critical work in the columns of the *Reflector*, started by him in 1811. Here were published the two papers on the *Genius of Hogarth* and the *Tragedies of Shakespeare*, in which Lamb's serious prose culminates. They are no academic essays. Both were provoked by current fatuities of opinion, and written in a fervour of nobly vindictive rage. But the errors they attacked lay in opposite directions, and they thus represent opposite aspects of Lamb's critical thought. Hogarth was disparaged by a sentimentally refined criticism, as a painter of low life, aiming only to raise a laugh, ignorant of drawing and careless of beauty. Lamb proclaims him the great English master of imaginative painting, Shake-

Shakespearean in intensity of vision, in profusion of thought, in many-sided sympathy with human life, in the blending of laughter and tears. If he defends Hogarth from the sentimentalists, he defends Shakespeare from the realists. The impudent epitaph on Garrick, in which the player was made to share, on equal terms, the glory of the playwright, provoked Lamb to his memorable paradox, that 'the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for stage performance than those of almost any other dramatist whatever.' Coleridge shared if he did not inspire this view; it sprang directly from their keener sense of the imaginative greatness of the Shakespearean drama. To Lamb and Coleridge criminality was but a minor trait, a secondary accident, in the genius of Richard or Macbeth; but on the stage the criminal was everything. 'The murderer stands out; but where is the lofty genius, the man of vast capacity, the profound, witty, accomplished Richard?' Lear on the stage is 'an old man tottering about with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters on a rainy night.' 'But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted;' the petty artifices of the theatre are insignificant, and its tawdry splendours vulgar in the presence of the sublime Lear of Shakespeare, 'and that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches.' Thus Lamb, who had urged the right of the imagination, in Hogarth's case, to shape its own world out of the common stuff of ordinary life, defended, in the case of Shakespeare, its right to shape a world which ordinary life can only blunderingly and blindly reproduce. So, in the *Sanity of True Genius*, long afterwards, he insisted that Caliban and the Witches are as true to the laws of their own being as Othello, Hamlet, and Macbeth. To Lamb the two attitudes were equally natural. The genial penetrating eye for common things is not more, nor less, a part of his spirit than the

irrepressible instinct for romance which weaves about every fragment of fact or incident a rich vesture of fancy. He was indeed no mystic, like Coleridge; and his lively apprehension of the common detail of life was quite untinged with the awe which interprets the meanest things as symbols of pervading spirit. The sensible world in which he lived and loved, and the imaginative world in which his mind was steeped, were two incommensurable regions which he had no metaphysics to bring into accord. The natural expression of such a mind was *humour*; the humour which lies near to pathos and continually passes into and emerges from it; the humour which has absolutely nothing in common with that laughter to which the caricaturist appeals; humour which is charged with poetry and with kindness, with imagination and with love, with the airiest romance and the profoundest good sense.

It was this consummate flower of his genius, presupposing all the earlier stages of its growth, which found expression in Lamb's later essays, and particularly in those contributed to the *London Magazine* over the famous signature 'Elia.' His connection with this magazine began in 1820; and for five years following, not least in consequence of Lamb's papers, it held the first place among English monthly reviews, and competed on equal terms with the Edinburgh *Blackwood*, founded three years before (1817), and presided over by the genial and boisterous Wilson. Hazlitt's *Table Talk*, De Quincey's *Confessions*, appeared here. Cary, Hood, Carlyle, Alan Cunningham, Hartley Coleridge, Bernard Barton, Julius Hare, and Landor were occasional contributors, some of them only to the later numbers. But the lasting glory of the magazine was Elia. Compared to his Attic prose, how Bœotian are the once famous 'Ambrosian Nights' of 'Maga,' with their up-

roarious jocularity, their vinous fumes, their echo of clashing glasses and flying corks; yet there is sufficient analogy to make the comparison instructive. Wilson, like Lamb, was a Wordsworthian, a critical upholder of the new poetry; his humour, like Lamb's, presupposes a rich and joyous imagination. Nay, Lamb has at times a delicate wantonness of fancy which superficially recalls the more athletic vaultings and gambollings of the northern wit. Wilson's work undoubtedly contains some of the same ingredients as Lamb's, but it contains them *as* ingredients, tumbled out crudely on the page. Lamb's, on the other hand, has the perfect finish, the harmonious fusion, of art, as well as the most engaging naturalness and ease. All the machinery of the conventional essay is quietly put aside. He does not attempt to show us how many fine things he can say on a hackneyed subject. Neither does he pose as a speculator upon abstruse problems. He does not deal in problems but in memories, memories of simple things and simple people, often with the pathos of death or oblivion clinging about them; the sights of common London ('and what else is a great city but a collection of sights?'), the chimney-sweepers and the beggars, the Jews and the actors, the choice savours of beasts and of fish, the street cries, and the clanging bells. He delights in the local, he is alive to the fine flavour of names. We are in 'the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire,' or in Islington, or by the New River, in Mincing Lane, or the Bath road, or watching 'those old blind Tobits' lining the walls of Lincoln's Inn, or the feasting chimney-sweeps in Smithfield, or the hungry scholars in Christ's Hospital. In this Lamb belongs to the fellowship, not of Wordsworth, or even of Coleridge, but of Scott. 'Many people,' he wrote to Coleridge in sending an early sonnet, 'would not like words so prosaic and familiar as Islington and Hertfordshire.'

These and many more fragments of his experience Lamb invests with an atmosphere of so magic a quality, that while every filament stands out clear and true, the whole seems to have suffered a change into some more precious and ethereal substance. Congenial instinct early drew him to the great English masters in this kind, the seventeenth century moralists—to Burton, to Fuller, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Donne. He loved in each of these the rich and curious imagination, for which nothing was too familiar or too trifling to be wrought into 'passionate' conceits or abstruse disquisition, or to reveal quiet glimpses out across the infinities of space and time. Imagination of a more ethereal kind, as in Shelley, or of a grosser and more concrete kind, as in Scott, or of the remote and mythological kind as in Southey, attracted him little. His own imagination glances off, as it were, upon the edge of humour, and becomes a glittering spray of freaks and sallies. He has, from first to last, a boyish delight in play. His overflowing charity was materially helped by his gift for constructing comedy out of the meanest stuff of human nature. In the beggar who cheated him he saw a comedian playing a part, and joyously paid his money for the performance; he was peculiarly ready to believe in the art which plays with the elements of life—which creates a fantastic world of its own—like humanity, but detached from the conditions of human beings. It was thus that he persuaded himself that the Restoration comedy was a genial fantasy, flung gaily before the eyes of audiences to whose habits and experience the *Wishforts* and the *Millamants* were as foreign as *Caliban*.

Lamb is one of the most intensely and peculiarly English of all English critics. He knew no modern language but his own, and his fine sensitiveness to the glories of English poetry was neither heightened nor qualified by comparison.



Of the few foreign writers whom he esteemed faintly through translations, none influenced his thought or speech. We need not wonder that he half agreed with Wordsworth in thinking *Candide* 'dull,' and with Coleridge in taking *Faust* to be 'a disagreeable canting tale of seduction.'

Thomas De Quincey, born in Manchester, 1785, has recounted his own early career in the most classical of English autobiographies. His escape from the Manchester Grammar School, 1802, the picturesque wanderings which ensued, his Oxford years from 1803 to 1808, his acquaintance with Coleridge and Wordsworth, are told in brilliant and memorable pages. In 1809 began the first period of his literary life, with his settlement as Wordsworth's neighbour at Grasmere. There he collected a library, read metaphysics, political economy, literature, sank deeper and deeper into the abyss of opium-drinking, wooed and wedded (1816) the 'Dear M.' of the *Confessions*, fell, in 1818, under the spell of Ricardo, and dreamed of a 'Prolegomena to all future Systems of Political Economy,' and other vast works which remained dreams. A sudden loss of fortune cut short this idyllic existence. He went to London, and presently turned his aberrations to brilliant account in the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1820). This at once won him a secure standing among the notable band of contributors who were then creating the brief glory of the *London Magazine*, where it first appeared. For the next three years he wrote frequently for it, until, upon its changing hands in 1823, the friend of Christopher North found a ready welcome on the staff of *Blackwood's*,—the northern prototype which it had for a moment rivalled. De Quincey was, in fact, a consummate magazine writer, and almost all his writing during a long life

was either actually contributed to magazines, or is at least, in its merits and its defects, essentially magazine work. He himself classified his writings under three heads,—autobiographical, critical, and imaginative. In all three the matter is of less worth than the style which enshrines it; a style whose one weakness it is to deploy on too slight provocation its inexhaustible phraseological resources, and to recognize no season in which a miracle of expression is out of place. In the third division this defect becomes a deliberate canon of art, an element in the structure of that prose of impassioned reverie, of which De Quincey claimed to be the creator. The latter part of the *Confessions*, the *English Mail Coach*, and the *Suspiria de Profundis* are wonderful examples of the art which seizes the most impalpable and visionary suggestions of fancy, and makes them seem real without ceasing to be incorporeal; or, again, which broods over some apparently everyday fact, until the hidden threads which connect it with the complex vitalities of the universe start into view, and it becomes the nucleus of a throng of imagined presences—the ‘theme’ of a ‘dream-fugue’ of endlessly intertwining melodies. In ordinary narrative this habit of style at times produces irritating redundancies, clogging, for instance, the pathetic tale of George and Sarah Green (a Grasmere dalesman and his wife, who perished in a snowstorm on the mountains, and are remembered through the heroism of their young daughter) with curious superfluities of doubt and idle ingenuities of suggestion. At other times, as in *The Revolt of the Tartars*, the restless imagination works under the control of a more disciplined art, presenting the obscure passages of a remote and chaotic politics under an illumination which reveals many elements of truth, and gives to this essay a dramatic sweep and breadth worthy of Gibbon, however far it may fall beneath him in fundamental historic grasp. And the more intimate and

intense portions of his own autobiography are written with incomparable vividness and charm. His critical essays abound with various learning, but are more remarkable for incidental felicities of expression than for penetrating criticism. It was characteristic of his predominant instinct for word and phrase that he thought the literature of Greece less remarkable than its language (*Appraisal of Greek Literature*, 1838). German he recommended to his 'Young Man whose Education has been neglected' (1823), but as a literature of knowledge, not of power,—a valuable distinction which we owe to him; and though he keenly appreciated the fantastic exuberance, akin to his own, of Richter, he was impervious to the subtle poetic realism of Goethe, and his unpardonable review of *Wilhelm Meister*, as translated by Carlyle, is among the basest products of the older criticism, as Carlyle's preface to his translation was the first clear and trumpet-toned announcement of the new.

John Wilson ('Christopher North'), born at Paisley, 1785, grew up a precocious child, eager and energetic in work and in play, a delighted rover among the 'endless interchange of woods and meadows, glens, dells and broomy nooks' that surrounded the manse of Mearns, where his first schooling was had. While a student at Glasgow (1797-1803) he was captivated by the *Lyrical Ballads*; and, in 1802, addressed to Wordsworth a long and remarkable letter of critical discipleship. At Oxford (1803-1807) his extraordinary personal fascination and prowess in many fields secured him, in De Quincey's language, 'an infinite gamut of friends and associates' from heads of houses to stable-boys and prize-fighters, and surrounded his name with a halo of heroic legend. In 1807 he settled at Elleray, on the banks of Windermere, and became at once an intimate of the Grasmere circle, which shortly after

J. Wilson  
(1785-1854).

included De Quincey. Wilson, magnificent in his tastes, was the seigneur among these recluse scholars and poets, and literature divided his attention with wrestling matches, the hunting of bulls by night, and the maintenance of a brood of fighting-cocks and a fleet of yachts; but his boisterous geniality excluded any arrogant thought. His first volume of poetry, the *Isle of Palms*, 1812, did not rise above the graceful mediocrity which then best secured the appreciation of the reviewers. In 1815 the sudden loss of his fortune forced him, in a happy hour for his fame, to bend to more persistent labours. He gave up Elleray, settled in Edinburgh, and published a second volume, the *City of the Plague*, in the following year. In October, 1817, he received overtures from Jeffrey to write in the *Edinburgh*, and began almost simultaneously his long connection with *Blackwood*. The presiding genius of *Blackwood's* in its earliest phase of savagery and mystification was, however, as we have seen, rather Lockhart than Wilson, whose critical instincts were more generous, and whose Teutonic exuberance did not so easily admit disguise. His election in 1820 to the chair of Moral Philosophy involved him in laborious, and largely novel, studies, but did not prevent his contributing, on an average, two articles a month to 'Maga.' After Lockhart's departure in 1825 to edit the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood* became more and more an embodiment of Wilson's personality. Glowing tributes to Wordsworth made amends in some sort for the scurrilous abuse of Coleridge in earlier days. There was still some pretence of mystification, but no one was any longer mystified; imaginary names of imaginary authors became transparent pseudonyms of actual persons. Wilson's multifarious pursuits reflected themselves, without reserve in the *Magazine*. Criticism, biography, tales of Scottish life, poured in only too exuberant profusion from

his pen. Poetry, sport, and revelry were three fountains of inexhaustible inspiration ; and it was from an intimate blending of the most vivid joys of all three that his most original and lasting work proceeded. Tavern meetings with good cheer and good society, long tramps among the heathery glens—‘glorious guffawing,’ as the Wilsonian Hogg put it, ‘all night, and immeasurable murder all day,’—were the elements which, flung across the rich refracting medium of his imagination, evolved those unique compounds of poetry, wit, humour, drama, high spirits, and balderdash—the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. The early numbers of the series, which extended through thirteen years (1822-1835), were partly the work of Lockhart, Maginn, Hogg and Sime ; but Wilson became more and more the dominating mind, nor was it any merely editorial labour which transformed the two latter personages into the immortal figures of the Shepherd and Tickler. To pass from the Hogg of Lockhart’s life to the Hogg of the *Noctes*, is like passing from the Socrates of Aristophanes to the Socrates of Plato. Wilson, with wonderful skill, has lifted the homely shepherd into a region of poetry and eloquence which he may have occasionally reached, but did not inhabit, while yet preserving the rich flavour of his character quite intact. The following passage illustrates admirably at once the quality of the shepherd and the tastes of Wilson, and the riotous luxuriance of flowers and weeds which the *Noctes* everywhere exhibit :

‘Conversation between friends is just like walking through a mountainous kintra—at every glen-mouth the wun’ blows frae a different airt—the bit bairnies come tripping alang in opposite directions—noo a harebell scents the air—noo sweet-briar—noo heather-bank—here is a gruesome quagmire, there a plat o’ sheep-nibbled grass, smooth as silk and green as emeralds—here a stony region of cinders and lava, there groves o’ the lady-fern

embowering the sleeping roe—here the hillside in its own various dyes resplendent as the rainbow, and there woods that the Druids would have worshipped—hark, sounding in the awful sweetness o' evening wi' the cushat's song, and the deaden'd roar o' some great waterfa' far aff in the very centre o' the untrodden forest.'

Wilson's expansive and buoyant temperament hardly promised excellence in criticism. His critical judgments are more genial than penetrating, they express enthusiasm but do not define character. And his generosity is capable of signal extravagances, as when, in one of his exhilarating *causeries* upon poetry, he hails Moore as the greatest of song-writers, and Miss Baillie—'our own Joanna'—as 'a sister spirit of Shakspeare,' creatress of tragedies which Sophocles or Euripides, nay even Æschylus himself, might have feared 'in competition for the crown.'

William Hazlitt, born in 1778 at Maidstone, was a precocious boy, whose genius, nevertheless, flowered somewhat late. The son of a Unitarian minister, of Irish blood, he grew up in the sturdiest Nonconformity, and the passion for civil and religious liberty was as much the substance of his nature, 'bone of his bone,' as the Celtic grace of his speech. At thirteen he vindicated Priestley in a letter to a local newspaper, which secured, and deserved, insertion. At sixteen he was irritating his tutors at the Unitarian college by a preoccupation with schemes of radical reform. But this revolutionary ardour, which continued, like all his ardours, unabated to the end, was but the negative aspect of a far more potent gift—an extraordinary relish for whatever is rich, strong, original in human nature. The broad, strong nature-painting of Smollett and Fielding, of Farquhar and Vanbrugh, Rabelais and Cervantes, was his early delight; Rousseau's *New Heloise* added to the fascination already

W. Hazlitt  
(1778-1830).

exercised by the prophet of the Revolution. His delight in the novels was no idle love of story and adventure. His eager intellect was continually storing observations and shaping problems. He wrestled with the fundamental questions of philosophy, and worked through the English 'metaphysicians' from Hobbes to Hume in the process. In 1796 he came for the first time under the spell of Burke by meeting with the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. He was arrested by its matchless spontaneity. 'That is a man pouring out his mind upon paper,' he exclaimed. Burke was for him, throughout, not a consummate rhetorician, but a great man pouring out his mind.

It was in this phase of unformed and conflicting purposes—literature, politics, philosophy—that young Hazlitt's obscure path was suddenly crossed by the splendid apparition of Coleridge (January, 1798). His subsequent account of their 'first acquaintance,' of Coleridge's preaching, and his own visit in the spring to Nether Stowey, is a critical document of equal importance and fascination, in which the remembered ardour of hero-worship is touched with the subacid of disillusion. No other eyes so keen penetrated into the workshop of the Lyrical Ballads. What he himself owed to this friendship he has declared with even exaggerated emphasis: 'I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the wayside, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, . . . my ideas float on winged words. . . . My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, . . . ; my heart . . . has never found . . . a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, . . . I owe to Coleridge.'

Complete articulateness was, however, still far off. His first essay, an *Argument*, based on Butler, *In favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*, appeared only in 1805, after several years spent chiefly in the resolute

pursuit of art. Painting was for Hazlitt a school in the criticism which springs from subtle sympathy. As he toiled day by day to render the last nuance of reflected light in the wrinkled face of his first model with the noble truth of Rembrandt, he learned (as he confesses) 'to see good in everything, and to know that there is nothing vulgar in nature seen with the eye of science or of true art.' The brush was laid down at last, but with a pang. For nearly ten years more his career was outwardly desultory. He intervened in politics in 1806 with his *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs*; in political economy in 1807, with a *Reply to Malthus*; he continued the Memoirs of the Jacobin dramatist Holcroft, and carried on the 'discoveries' of Horne Tooke, a Jacobin in philology as well as in politics. His attack on Malthus's theory revealed the most striking limitation of an intellect which comprehended the angel in man far better than the brute. It was the logical sequel to the Essay on Natural Disinterestedness. But Hazlitt's proper work was to analyse genius. During these apparently desultory years his critical power, fed by immense reading and incessant thought, steadily matured; and when, in 1814, he made his decisive entry into literature, it was with a mind not only formed but fixed. He was one of the men who do not develop through a series of phases, but after an obscure incubation suddenly emerge complete. He was fond of saying that he had done all his work in early manhood, and merely written off his mind in his books. As a critic, too, he disdained the type of intellect which improves' ('an improving poet never becomes a great one'), and was peculiarly lacking in the faculty which foresees the flower in the seed. He had no vestige of Coleridge's sense for the organic; and the 'sinewy texture' of his ideas stands in sharp contrast to the iridescent web of Coleridge's



shifting creeds. It was with Coleridge, no longer the hero of Nether Stowey, and with Coleridge's master, A. W. Schlegel, that Hazlitt measured himself, as a rival, not as a disciple, in his first considerable piece of literary criticism, the *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817). 'We were piqued that it should be reserved for a foreign critic to give reasons for the faith which we English have in Shakespeare.' Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare*, on the other hand, given six years before, are entirely ignored. Much that Coleridge had there done Hazlitt could not do; some things he could do better. His brilliant incisive style gives definiteness and profile to whatever he describes; there are no digressions, no parentheses. He passes the plays in review, singling out the choicest morsels with unerring skill, and characterizing them in a few vivid and powerful sentences. But, as has been well said, Hazlitt rather exhibits than reveals beauties. He throws the salient features of each drama into brilliant relief, ignoring the obscure and the unobtrusive. He brushes away all that is mysterious and problematic in Shakespeare, and presents every feature in hard metallic clearness. And though he fully accepted the principle of Coleridge and Schlegel that Shakespeare's art was equal to his genius, he did little to illustrate it. Nor did he, like Coleridge, attempt to elicit from the chaotic disarray of the dramas the history of Shakespeare's mind.

The course of *Lectures on the English Poets*, given in the following year (1818), is planned in the bold isolating manner of the *Characters*. Chaucer and Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, Dryden and Pope, Burns and Cowper, stand out in powerful relief from a faintly tinted background. It is easy for us to overlook the significance of these lectures, brilliant and powerful as they are. For no one, with the partial exception of Coleridge, had yet

attempted what Hazlitt here achieved. For the first time, a critic of the highest rank took stock of the poetic achievements of England. Chaucer had been laboriously investigated, edited, and 'modernized,' but Pope, Dryden, and Wordsworth had done less than Tyrwhitt, Warton, and even Godwin to make his genius vividly felt. Hazlitt's treatment of the eighteenth century was valuable in another way, by correcting the contemptuous criticism of it by his own teachers. Like Lamb, he gloried in Pope's 'divine compliments,' and insisted, with the instinct of a master of prose style, on his greatness as a writer. Even from Lamb he dissented in disparaging Cowper, whose 'divine chit-chat' Coleridge had once won Lamb's heart by extolling. There was something, doubtless, of surly aloofness as well as of critical independence in these judgments, and the final lecture *On the Living Poets* is a mine of acid epigrams, made more poignant by faint praise. Never was the bitter exultation of the emancipated disciple, conscious that his revolt is at the same time a renunciation, more thrillingly uttered than in his closing reminiscence of Coleridge's glorious youth:

'In his descriptions you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I! That spell is broke; that time is gone for ever; that voice is heard no more; but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound.'

In the *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, delivered the next year, 1819, Hazlitt took up a subject, the old delight of his boyhood, in which his judgment was, on the whole, more competent than in any other. He here far

surpasses Lamb, both in range of culture and in critical strength. He repudiates the view that the Restoration comic drama was a fantastic creation depicting the manners of an imaginary society. And his vivid sketches of Montaigne, Le Sage, Rabelais, and Molière, were a needed protest against the disparagement of French letters current in Romantic circles in England as in Germany. Like Schlegel, indeed, he disparaged Molière's art, but he differed from Schlegel in doing homage to his hardly surpassed comic genius; and it was reserved for Hazlitt to administer the decisive rebuke to the Wordsworthian dictum that Voltaire was 'dull.'

If among the comic writers Hazlitt was emphatically on his own ground, he entered, in the *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Queen Elizabeth*, 1821, a territory relatively strange. Lamb was here the adept, and Hazlitt (except as regards Shakespeare) the novice. But six weeks of solitude on Salisbury plain with a dozen volumes of old plays sufficed to convert his novitiate into mastery. These *Lectures* are hardly less ripe than those on the comic writers; but their ripeness is that which results, not from long companionship, but from the contact of a mind at once powerful and highly trained with a subject new, but thoroughly congenial. The criticism is steeped in the vivid emotion of first impressions, and Hazlitt's first impressions were commonly lasting. 'Old honest Decker's Friscobaldo I shall never forget,' he exclaims, with one of those sudden touches of intimacy which give his haughty manner its charm; 'I became only of late acquainted with this last-mentioned worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life.' Hazlitt's judgments agree very largely with Lamb's. But sometimes Hazlitt's austerer taste and keener scent for artifice lead him to divergence; as when he discovers 'not fortitude but affectation,' not-

withstanding Lamb's 'impressive eulogy,' in the famous death-scene of Calantha in the *Broken Heart*.

Hazlitt's career as a man of letters, though hardly as a critic, culminates in the series of contemporary portraits which he called the *Spirit of the Age*. It is the work of a philosophic Ishmael. The preceding years had heightened the isolation to which his difficult temper made him liable. The savage attacks of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* had alienated the public and stopped the circulation of his books; his separation from his first wife, mysterious desertion by his second, and the infatuated passion of which he told the story in *Liber Amoris* (1823), tried the faith of his best friends. But Hazlitt's intellect fed on solitude; and as a piece of writing this is his finest achievement. The opinions put forward are those which he had always expressed, but the expression has grown richer and nobler. The virulence of the *Letter to Gifford* is chastened, in the portrait of Mr. Gifford, into finished and ironical invective far more galling. The portraits of the poets are elaborated from the closing lecture of 1819, with equivocal compliment replacing blunt reproof. The political portraits recall his early sketches of statesmen, but are incomparably more splendid in style. The book is crowded with good things, but, as portraiture, is chiefly remarkable as indicating what shape the leading figures of the age assumed in the remarkable brain of William Hazlitt. And it may be noted that a series which includes Horne Tooke and 'Geoffrey Crayon,' passes over Shelley, Keats, and Landor.

Hazlitt's obtrusive personality had a fairer field in his numerous essays: the *Round Table*, 1817, *Table Talk*, 1821-22, the *Plain Speaker*, 1826. Hazlitt is one of the masters of the essay. His peremptory and decisive intellect is penetrated with passion; he is never either

abstruse or sentimental; his most abstract thought is steeped in imagery or pathetic reminiscence, his homeliest allusion ennobled by fine suggestion. He had a peculiar hatred for two things—insipidity and affectation. What he chiefly loved—and it is the clue to his criticism of life as well as of literature—is vividly expressed in his description of English character in the Introduction to the *Elizabethan Dramatists*:

‘We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. . . . We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion. . . . We are not forward to express our feelings, and, therefore, they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence. . . . Our wit comes from us “like bird-lime, brains, and all.”’

In relish for what is original and at first hand, Hazlitt stood in the van of the ‘return to Nature.’ He had the keenest relish for marrowy strength; he was repelled by the faintest suspicion of the fop or prig. Lamb’s circle tabooed ‘fine gentlemen.’ He disparaged Addison beside Steele, Cowper beside Thomson, Richardson beside Fielding. He delighted in the Restoration dramatists because they painted the follies they saw, while Lamb delighted in them because they did *not*. He lived to deliver a formidable blow at the ‘dandy school’ of Bulwer and Disraeli (1827). He intervened in the boyish controversy of Bowles and Byron over Pope like a giant among dwarfs, contemptuously patronising the insipid advocate of nature, and pulverising in a few incisive sentences the futile reasonings of the advocate of art.

Yet Hazlitt’s conception of nature was very different from Wordsworth’s. What Wordsworth and Cowper called simple, he called insipid. In his striking review of

the *Excursion* (1815), he frankly expressed his dislike of the country, and indifference to the peasant. 'Vanity and luxury are the civilisers of the world and sweeteners of human life.' Yet he did not idolize Fleet Street, like Lamb, but sought his lonely haunt at Winterslow to write and to read. No luxury of magnificence repels him, if it is sincere. He praises Titian as ardently as Hogarth; and with all his relish for Cobbett, is himself the one great disciple in English prose of Burke. The gorgeous imagination of Romanticism, feeding on all the pomps and shows of the past, is crossed in Hazlitt with the stern iconoclasm, the naked veracity of the Revolutionary; and he is worthily marked by his own words when near to death,—'I have written no commonplace, nor a line that licks the dust.'

Leigh Hunt was, with Hazlitt, in 1820, among the best-hated men in England. They, almost alone among men of letters who were primarily such, represented uncompromising Radicalism. But while Hazlitt was a genuine critical force in politics as well as in literature, Hunt was a man of letters playing the politician. Henry James Leigh Hunt, born in 1784, near London, the son of a West Indian, followed Coleridge and Lamb at Christ's Hospital. At twenty-one he began his long career of journalism by writing theatrical critiques for his brother's paper the *News*. In 1808 the two started *The Examiner*, which at once took rank among the boldest and liveliest journals on the Opposition side. Hunt's trenchant and powerful dramatic criticism broke down the venal collusion between the stage and the press, and attracted general attention. The zest of battle wrought its full effect upon Hunt's sensitive brain. His famous so-called 'libel' upon the Prince Regent (1811) made him the hero of the Liberal world, and provided him with many valuable and some perilous friendships. Condemned

H. J. L. Hunt  
(1784-1859).

to two years of imprisonment, which the votive offerings of his friends and his own buoyant spirits made a pleasant retreat, he reaped the advantages of martyrdom without its inconveniences. Embowered in the pleasant greenery of his rose-trellis papered cell he read the Italian poets, meditated metrical reforms, and applied both studies in his *Story of Rimini*, a daring expansion of the great Francesca scene in the *Inferno*. The *Story of Rimini* (1816) is the starting-point of that free or Chaucerian treatment of the heroic couplet, and of the colloquial style, eschewing epigram and full of familiar turns, which Shelley in *Julian and Maddalo*, and Keats in *Lamia*, made classical. But Hunt's freedom is controlled by no such subtle art as theirs. His familiarity inclines to be vulgar. His bits of banal dialogue jar upon an atmosphere often full of the perfume of romance. This atmosphere is a principal charm in all his verse. The luscious richness of Keats he in some degree anticipated as he in some degree provoked it. But of the riper and austerer Keats of *Hyperion* and *The Odes* he has hardly a trace.

The years succeeding his imprisonment were Hunt's golden time. *Foliage* followed *Rimini* (1818); and into his literary journal, the *Indicator*, he poured, week by week, a stream of bright, warm-hearted, voluble prose, interspersed with dainty renderings from his Italian poets; and Hunt had but one or two equals among his contemporaries as a verse translator.

His journey to Italy in 1821, to edit the *Liberal*, was the beginning of misfortune. The *Liberal*, after a momentary glory, was ruined by Shelley's death and Byron's withdrawal; and Hunt, mortified by failure, and humiliated by his dependence on Byron's contemptuous generosity, returned home to write his volumes of malignant gossip, *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries* (1827).

and to resume his old career of literary journalism, with tarnished honour. He lived through another generation, till 1859, struggling for some years with actual want, and only more deeply immersed by the successive literary enterprises with which he strove to meet it. Most of his shorter lyrics appeared in his *Poetical Works*, 1832; *A Legend of Florence* in 1840; *The Palfrey* in 1842. It is chiefly by some of the briefer pieces that he lives. His jocund and joyous spirit 'sings its own natural song' in the sonnet to the cricket and grasshopper, his quaint humour in *The Man and the Fish*. And he had moments of lofty inspiration in which he was capable of *Abou ben Adhem* and the Nile Sonnet. An essayist, poet, and translator, full (at his best) of grace and charm in a kind quite his own, he lacked both the stamina and the piercing imaginative vision which make Hazlitt so great. In temperament he was more akin to Lamb, but he equally lacked Lamb's rarer qualities both as a man and as a writer; and his chief function in literature was to further the ease, vivacity, and grace of which, though in a far choicer kind, Lamb was a master in prose, and Chaucer and Ariosto in verse.

In criticism, as in all else, the production of Coleridge was notoriously fragmentary; and he has  
 S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) been less fortunate than his fellows, for only a fragment of what he produced has survived. The intellectual interest, however, of that fragment, as well as its positive merit, is very great; for we here have the opportunity of watching the evolution of an intellect the most specifically Romantic in temper that England has ever known, under the stimulus of the only school of European thought which has ever been penetrated with Romantic ideas. It is easy to exaggerate the degree of his subservience to his German masters; for in one



important department—the criticism of Shakespeare—he freely adopted their more articulate formulation of ideas at which he had, it is probable, independently arrived. But the fact remains that his history as a Shakespearean critic, and as a thinker upon criticism, begins, for us, from the day when he landed at Hamburg and was captivated by the portrait of Lessing in the house of Klopstock. And it had three phases, marked by the dominance, successively, of the teaching of Lessing, of Kant and Schiller, and of Schelling.

To Lessing, Coleridge owed his emancipation from the current faith of eighteenth-century England that Shakespeare was an ‘irregular’ ‘artless’ genius. At Stowey he had declared him, according to Hazlitt, ‘a stripling in art;’ eighteen years later he avowed in the *Biographia* that Lessing had first taught to all thinking men the true nature of Shakespeare’s ‘irregularities’—had shown, in fact, that the Shakespearean drama was everywhere controlled by subtle contriving intelligence, that its apparent caprices had a ground which it was the business of criticism to discover.

But Lessing shared the spirit of the *Aufklärung* too largely not to give more than its due to the function of analytic intellect in art. Schiller qualified this by the doctrine that genius is ‘naive,’ meaning by no means that it is ‘lawless’ in the sense of the English Shakespeareans, but that it attains the organic perception of art by instinctive sense of harmony, not by conscious contrivance. Of this modified teaching there are traces in Coleridge’s first course of lectures on Shakespeare, as reported by Crabb Robinson (1808), and it was a cardinal doctrine of the *Friend* (1809).

Finally, this teaching of Schiller was elaborated by the Romantic school in the narrower sense, in particular by

Richter, A. W. Schlegel and Schelling. Coleridge seems to have become acquainted with their writings in this order, but as both Richter and Schlegel are charged with the ideas of Schelling, his later study of Schelling produced no decisive change in his mode of thought. The Romantic standpoint is first apparent in his *Lectures* of 1811-12.

Three years Coleridge's junior, Schelling had at twenty-five completed the glittering fabric of his philosophy; and German Romanticism was provided with a metaphysic while it was still busy announcing its own existence. Kantian idealism, physical science, and Romantic art were successively drawn into an all-embracing system, the controlling animus of which was variously expressed by such aphorisms as *Nature is spirit*; *Nature is self-organising*; *Nature is a poem*. Art was the culminating form of Nature; the unimpeded expression of creative energies struggling for utterance in the organic world.

From all this arose important developments of art theory. The poetic idealism of Goethe and Schiller passed with the Romantics into a mystic reverence for the work of genius as such. The main business of criticism was conceived to be reverent interpretation. Genius was contrasted with talent, as organic growth with mechanical combination. Similarly, Richter distinguished Imagination, the faculty of genius, which constructs organic wholes, from Fancy, which forms arbitrary aggregates. And, like other kinds of organic force, the action of imagination was conceived as a fusion of heterogeneous or opposite qualities. The 'union of opposites' became, in the hands of Schlegel, the fundamental formula of 'Romantic' art. The Shakespearean drama, for instance, combined tragedy and comedy, passion and humour, while the 'Classical' drama kept them severely apart.

All these points reappear in the *Lectures* of 1811-12 and the *Biographia Literaria* (1817). Thus Imagination is said to reveal itself 'in the balance and reconciliation of discordant qualities, of sameness with difference,' etc.; metre is a 'balance of antagonists,'—the result of the spontaneous effort to hold in check the workings of passion; Shakespeare 'unites the heterogeneous, like Nature,' and illustrates 'the great law of Nature, that opposites tend to attract and temper each other.' Genius is the reconciliation of inspiration and law. 'Poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power and beauty.' 'It must embody in order to reveal itself.' 'Passion in Shakespeare generally displays libertinism, but involves morality.' Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism is from first to last a continual quest of the evidences of organic structure, thus conceived. It illustrates both the value of the method and its perils. He made the first serious effort to grasp the totality of Shakespeare's work, and to trace out the inner history of his mind through the chronological chaos in which the dramas were still involved. The method gives subtlety, sometimes over-subtlety, to his appreciation of character. Every obvious trait becomes the mask of an alien quality which it conceals. He insists upon the inadequacy of the traditional classifications. He refuses to see sheer folly or villainy; dwells on the intellectual greatness of Iago, of Richard; repudiates the 'cowardice' of Falstaff, and finds in Polonius a wise man past his prime. He elicits the hidden pathos of humour, and is somewhat too prone to find profound judgment in a pun.

Next in importance to his criticism of Shakespeare, is his criticism of Wordsworth. He here brought the methods of German Romanticism to bear upon a poet whose work had not had the least share in suggesting them.

Wordsworth's 'defects' — 'inconstancy of style,' 'incongruity of thought and subject,' 'matter of factness' — were all violations of the organic fusion of opposed elements which the Romantic theory of imagination involves. On the other hand, Coleridge insisted, as no one had yet done, on the supreme imaginative quality of Wordsworth's best work, 'in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own.' The 'simple' Wordsworth of one legend and the 'vulgar' Wordsworth of another, still lingered, in low places and in high; but Coleridge's powerful chapters drove these phantoms for ever out of serious criticism.

As a critic he was greatest when he dealt with great writers. He could illuminate Dante and Cervantes; but in dealing with lesser work he was often arbitrary. His notes on the Elizabethan dramatists, other than Shakespeare, are not for a moment to be compared with those of Lamb. He prefers Massinger to Beaumont and Fletcher. He sees in Scott only his own imitator and the poet of picturesque castles and old armour. He brands the critics of France *en masse* as 'monkeys;' and shares to the full the Romantic antipathy to Voltaire.

Among the listeners to the wonderful old man at Highgate was one who, coming after him, must, as T. Carlyle (1795-1881), an expounder of the Romantic teaching about poetry, be preferred before him. It is only by his early essays in the *Edinburgh* and other reviews, and by his translation of *Wilhelm Meister* (1824), that Carlyle belongs to our period; but these contain passages surpassing, not only in prophetic fire, but in penetrating analytic force, anything that is reported, though not all that is suggested by the reports, of Coleridge. Nor is his standpoint altogether the same. He found his congenial nutriment not in the poetised nature and art of Schelling,

but in the ethical despotism of Fichte. Hence, while insisting still more powerfully and explicitly than Coleridge on the organic quality of true poetry, he draws a sharper and more disparaging distinction between its formal elements—the ‘garment’ of rhythm and style which never ceased to fascinate the author of *Christabel*—and its ‘soul,’ its inner meaning, its interpretation of the divine idea of the world. This procedure doubtless pressed hard upon poets who, like Scott or Keats, created without interpreting: but it had nothing in common with the taste for ‘didactic’ poetry. By ‘incorporating the everlasting reason of man in forms visible to his sense, and suitable to it,’ he meant, not a mere wrapping up of doctrine in verse, but a vital fusion of matter and form in ‘music, love, and beauty.’ In grasp of the historic method he far surpassed Coleridge. Nor did Coleridge ever lay down the exact procedure and limits of that reverent interpretation which both demanded of the critic, with clearness comparable to that of a few sentences in the essay on *Goethe* (1828): those in which he declares that ‘no man can pronounce dogmatically, with even a chance of being right, on the faults of a poem, till he has seen its very last and highest beauty.’ And that ‘to determine . . . whether what we call a fault *is* in very deed a fault,’ we must have settled two points; first, what the poet’s aim really was, and how far, with such means as it afforded him, he has fulfilled it; secondly, how far this aim accorded—not with *us* and our individual crotchets—but with human nature and the nature of things at large, with the universal principles of poetic beauty, as they stand written not in our text-books, but in the hearts and imaginations of all men.’ It was the greatness of Carlyle that the fiery naturalism of the Revolution, which had become prophetic in Shelley, was in him enriched by that relative and organic apprehension of life, art, and history,

which had grown up among the foes of revolution. In poetry as in ethics, truth was his last word; but few of its preachers have insisted so powerfully that truth has infinitely various accents, and that the poetry which is not original is naught

## CHAPTER V.

### THE NOVEL.

THE history of the novel in the age of Wordsworth falls into two phases, sharply marked off from one another by one of the most decisive events in the annals of fiction—the publication of *Waverley* (1814). The ‘Scotch novels’ not only gave an enormous stimulus to novel-writing; they changed the entire atmosphere in which novels were written. The production of the *Waverley* period is immensely greater in volume than that of its predecessor; it is, as a whole, richer in invention and more accomplished in art; and its methods continually betray the contagion of Scott’s example. The pre-*Waverley* period was conspicuously without any such controlling force; its fiction falls into sharply distinguished groups, with highly accentuated differences of aim and manner; differences which, with one signal exception, the work of the great Romantic master either rendered insignificant and obsolete, or else transcended and absorbed. If we set aside the totally alien masterpieces of Jane Austen, almost all that was richest and soundest in contemporary English imagination found expression in Scott.

The Novel  
(1774-1814).

This period of anarchy, or ‘transition,’ covers some forty or fifty years, following the deaths of the last classic novelists of the eighteenth century—Sterne (1768), Smollett (1771), and

Goldsmith (1774). Three types of novel can be clearly distinguished at the outset. The prose comedy of manners founded by Fielding became feminine and domestic in Frances Burney (*Evelina*, 1771), travelled and cosmopolitan in Dr. John Moore (*Zeluco*, 1786). Sentiment, the staple of Richardsonian romance, flushed and wavered through the many-coloured woof of *Tristram Shandy*; and Sterne found a disciple with more method and less art in Henry Mackenzie (*The Man of Feeling*, 1771). Lastly, the novel of terror, created in jest by Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764), had taken imposing shape in the oriental imaginings of Beckford's *Vathek* (1784). During the last decade of the century these distinct *genres* mingled, and new varieties emerged. The novel of manners became, in the hands of Bage, Holcroft, Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Edgeworth, revolutionary, or, at least, doctrinaire—a field for exploiting those ideals of Nature and the natural man which the novel of sentiment had half instinctively implied. The novel of terror, on the other hand, acquired, in the hands of Mrs. Radcliffe, a background of tender emotional landscape, and a pervading atmosphere of sentiment, without a particle of doctrine. Thus the heritage of the Man of Feeling, with his unconventional ways, his reforming zeal and his prompt emotion, is shared between the idealist hero—the 'Man as he ought to be'<sup>1</sup>—of the revolutionary school, and the gently romantic and wholly unrevolutionary heroines of Mrs. Radcliffe. William Godwin combined both *genres*, applying the machinery of Terror with revolutionary animus, while Jane Austen, incomparably the greatest novelist of the period before Scott, standing entirely apart from all revolutionary or Romantic influence, carried to its highest point the eighteenth-century

<sup>1</sup> Bage's *Man as he is not, or Hermsprong* (1796).



comedy of manners, with unapproached delicacy of art, and in a kind altogether her own.

All these sources of fiction were, when *Waverley* appeared, showing signs of exhaustion. Mrs. Radcliffe had long ceased to write, and had left the dubious honours of her mantle chiefly to a swarm of obscure caterers for circulating libraries. The revolutionary animus equally ceased to inspire. Bage and Holcroft were dead, and Godwin was publishing, at remote intervals, romances of family life. Jane Austen's brief career was nearly over, and her audience long remained rather fit than numerous.

But two fresh shoots had meanwhile begun to burgeon from the old stock. One of them promised little enough. Historical romance, as cultivated by the Miss Porters and the Miss Lees, and a crowd of yet more unscrupulous practitioners, was a wild chaos of adventures, violating truth of fact without any compensating fidelity to truth of imagination. Of better augury for romance were Miss Edgeworth's trenchant delineations of those contrasts in national manners, customs, and character which her Irish birth and English breeding made her prompt to seize, and her educational bias eager to enforce. The work of Scott had an external affinity to both. But he brought to his task a gift which the 'historical romancers' utterly lacked, and to which Miss Edgeworth's Rousseauist training was highly unfavourable had she possessed it, an imagination for which history and observation, past and present, were continuous and inseparable. He thus created a school of 'historical' romance in which the past was brought into relation with living men, and the portrayal of a living community was enriched and subtilized by an unexampled sensitiveness to every filament of tradition which bound it to the past.

Three writers adorn in their very different fashions the

decadence of the *Romance of Terror*. Matthew Gregory (familiarily known as 'Monk') Lewis, the son of a West Indian planter, was a man of amiable impulses, the pet and plaything of society, and its accomplished caterer in literary diablerie. After spending a year (1792-93) in Germany, he became, with William Taylor of Norwich, the first to apply a considerable knowledge of German to the promotion of English letters. But his taste was almost unexampled in its finished, imperturbable depravity; and he had the accomplished criminal's faculty of doing his bad things exceedingly well. Nothing can be worse in kind, and nothing, of its kind, can well be better than *Alonso the Brave*. It was Lewis's rôle to fling the orts and refuse of German Romanticism about the soil of England. It was his luck rather than merit to have once or twice thrown them where they nourished good seed, and now and then to have grasped a flower among his handfuls of treasured weeds. His false ballads helped to elicit the true ones of Scott, and the respectable ones of Southey, and he introduced to the author of *Manfred* what he doubtless regarded as that capital 'Tale of Wonder,' Goethe's *Faust*. His character was better than his work, and he died, a martyr to his care for the negroes on his Jamaica estate, feelingly regretted by the many friends he had bored, notably by Byron and by Scott. Lewis was twenty when he produced the notorious romance, *Ambrosio, or the Monk*, which conferred on him thenceforth his familiar soubriquet. It was followed by a crowd of now quite unreadable pieces—narrative and dramatic—*The Castle Spectre* (1798), *Tales of Wonder* (1801), *The Bravo of Venice* (1804), and many more. The feminine Radcliffian world of gentle sensibilities and innocent alarms was here invaded by a bustling practitioner full of the tricks of his trade.

He never thinks of 'explaining' his horrors, nor does he trace through pages of impressive description the shadow thrown before by calamities which do not happen. Terrors are the staple of his invention, and they come off with business-like promptitude. Lewis's work has almost no merit but a certain dashing cleverness, and its supernaturalism is weakest of all. Of Maturin's power of suggestion he had not a trace. The Lucifer who enters the prison of the Inquisition, where the criminal Monk is awaiting the stake, is a kind of stage devil, with long talons, sable wings, hair of snakes, and a voice which *sulphurous fogs had damped to hoarseness*.

After the charlatan the fanatic. Charles Robert Maturin was an Irish clergyman of French descent, as unsuccessful in life as Lewis was the reverse. He prefaced his first novel, *The Fatal Revenge, or the Family of Montorio* (1807), with a defence of the Radcliffian school, declaring that no source of emotion is so powerful or universal as the *fear arising from objects of invisible terror*, and insisting on the dignity of this fear as 'not the weak impulse of the nursery, but the passion of immortals, the dread and desire of their final habitation.' Maturin, in fact, took his supernaturalism more seriously than either Lewis or Mrs. Radcliffe; his visions possess him, and he lives under their shadow. 'Is there a flash of lightning,' he suddenly asks in *Melmoth*, 'that does not say visibly, if not audibly, Sinner, I cannot now penetrate the recesses of your soul, but how will you encounter my glare when the hand of the Judge is armed with me?' His senses seem preternaturally alive to every suggestion of dread, closed to everything else; his mind is a kind of spectro-scope, which turns sunlight into a few lurid lines upon a black ground. He cares only for the beauty that has terror in it; scenery and character appeal to him only through

C. R. Maturin  
(1782-1824).

the single gateway of awe. His *Rosolia*, for instance, is not merely, like Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, amiably sentimental; she has feverish and maddening sensibilities; and the country in which she grows up is described solely with mystic touches:—'woods whose depth of shade soothed and solemnized, seas whose vastness and serenity poured stillness on the soul—mountains whose wilder features mixed fear with wonder—masses of Greek and Gothic ruins [the School of Terror disdains history] whose very stones breathed round them that nameless spirit of antiquity which makes us tremble with a delicious dread,' etc. Maturin's most elaborate achievement was admittedly *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). It is a huge and formless piece of Titanism, its very formlessness adding to its weird unreality. Narrative is inlaid in narrative; time and space seem to lose their import. The motive of life prolonged by a mysterious compact is analogous to that of Godwin's *St. Leon*, but the gulf which separated the politician from the visionary is at once realized when we compare Godwin's hero who finds his long purse so excessively inconvenient, with that sleepless spectre of the piercing eyes who stalks through the centuries and across the seas in *Melmoth*. Maturin's imagination of the horrible is extraordinarily fertile, and entirely devoid of the Radcliffian scruple of truth. The midnight marriage of Melmoth with Isidora is a masterpiece in this unearthly invention: and amid the gathered anomalies of the scene—the dark and sepulchral vegetation, the blasts alternately chill and stifling, the roar of invisible water, there are touches of strange beauty, as when the hapless bride looks up at the ruined window through which the moonbeams fell, 'with that instinctive feeling of her former existence, and of the beautiful and glorious family of heaven, under whose burning light she had once imagined the moon her parent and the stars her kindred.'

In addition to several other novels—*The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), *The Milesian Chief* (1812), *The Albigenses* (1824)—Maturin produced three tragedies, but the attempt to construct a coherent plot only cramped his visionary imagination. *Bertram*, however, interested Byron, and was performed with applause at Drury Lane (1816); but its defects provoked Coleridge to a fierce onslaught in the *Biographia Literaria*, which was, until the present generation, Maturin's chief hold upon the popular memory. His second tragedy, *Manuel* (1817), Byron himself gave up. *Bertram* is a superb robber-chief, blended of Schiller's Karl Moor and Milton's Satan. Crudities and absurdities abound, but there are outbursts of wild poetry amidst the rant. Coleridge's critique brings into piquant juxtaposition the subtle Romanticism of the poets, and the crude Radcliffian premonitions which here still lingered.

The wife of Shelley and daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft shines a good deal by reflected light, but she has one well-grounded title to literary remembrance in her romance of *Frankenstein*. It originated in the speculative discussions of the memorable summer of 1816, when the Shelleys and Byron were daily companions at the Villa Diodati. Though doubtless a tale of wonder, *Frankenstein* belongs in reality less to the school of Lewis, than to that of Godwin's *St. Leon*. Its invention betrays a vein of eager philosophic and scientific curiosity of which Lewis's purely literary mind was quite innocent. The problem of creating life had fascinated the daring brains of the Revolution as it had done those of the Renaissance. To suppose it solved was merely to prolong and expand tendencies already vigorous in experience, while the wonders of Lewis and his tribe were wilful negations of experience, 'shot from a pistol' with a boyish delight in the impossible. The vivid drawing of

the discomforts of supernatural or quasi-supernatural knowledge, in particular, shows the influence of *St. Leon*. She subsequently attempted historical romance (*Valperga, or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, written at Pisa in 1821, published 1823, the *Perkin Warbeck*, 1830) with estimable success. In spite of much descriptive and analytic talent she shared the inaptitude for history which marked the Godwinian and Radcliffian schools alike. *The Last Man* (1826) which so deeply impressed the not very susceptible Jefferson Hogg,<sup>1</sup> has a pathetic significance as shadowing her own tragic loneliness,—the ‘loneliness of Crusoe’—as she herself long afterwards declared it to have been.

The revolutionary or *Doctrinaire* school of Novel was, except in the one region of educational theory, W. Godwin (1756-1836). more rapidly exhausted. Its greatest master, William Godwin, had achieved his first and chief success by showing in *Caleb Williams* (1794), that a tale of terror could be evoked, without recourse to supernatural incident, from the oppressions of the law. Its plot is a kind of nightmare, but a nightmare deliberately contrived by a powerful intellect whose morbidities did not lie in the direction of fever. His chief predecessors, Bage and Holcroft<sup>2</sup> had painted the adventures of revolutionary young men in a world of aristocrats; Godwin, who ascribed to Holcroft (with three others, including Coleridge,) a decisive influence upon his mind, and in 1796 travelled many miles out of his way to pay homage to Bage, adopted a more excellent way than theirs. The whole weight is thrown not upon what his hero thinks, but upon what he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his letter about it to her.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bage (1728-1801), *Man as he is* (1792); *Hermesprung, or Man as he is not* (1796). Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), *Anna St. Ives* (1792); *Hugh Trevor* (1794).

suffers. In his second novel *St. Leon* (1799), Godwin withdraws somewhat from the extreme revolutionary position rather implied than enforced in his first. His brief experience of marriage with an ardent and intellectual woman had softened his sense of the iniquities of that institution, and he now portrays a long-suffering wife with a sympathy for which he conscientiously apologizes in the preface. Mrs. Radcliffe's two chief romances moreover (*Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794, *The Italian*, 1797) had appeared in the interim; and Godwin was alive both to their force and to their popularity. He plunged into the romance of marvel, abandoned contemporary England for sixteenth-century Spain, and borrowed the Radcliffian machinery of sunsets, thunderstorms, and Inquisition dungeons. But his change of front does not amount to very much. *St. Leon*, to whom the Rosicrucian secret of unlimited wealth has been communicated in an untoward hour is involved thereby in a persecution differing only in its special incidents from that suffered by Williams. In displaying these miseries Godwin shows power of inventing appropriate detail; but his methods are too matter-of-fact to elicit the subtler forms of wonder. His historic scenery wholly fails to produce illusion. Sentiments and atmosphere belong, like the style, to the eve of the nineteenth century; *St. Leon* is a Godwin faintly disguised, and an off-hand reference at intervals to the Earl of Surrey or Mary Queen of Scots has the startling effect of an apparition. *St. Leon* made, on the whole, less impression than its predecessor, but had a great circulation in Ireland, as Godwin found when he visited Grattan in 1800.

Godwin's novels were written at such long intervals that each represents a distinct phase of his mental growth. In

<sup>1</sup> Ann Radcliffe (*née* Ward), 1764-1823.

*Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling* (1804), he turned from the Tale of Terror to draw 'familiar' events in the manner of his friends Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Opie. But Godwin lacked the feminine delicacy of touch which makes the 'familiar' interesting; his speculative mind required the stimulus of imaginary, or, at least, abnormal, conditions. The best figure is the Swiss Ruffigny, an embodiment of the Godwinian virtues of benevolence and self-abnegation, whose story nevertheless is made very human. Much ethical doctrine is conveyed, and marriage is now not merely sympathetically delineated, but urgently defended. Godwin at his best far surpasses the other English revolutionary novelists in the art of fusing ethical doctrine with imaginative form; but as he grew older, and the fire burnt low, the two elements gradually disintegrated. His two remaining novels, *Mandeville* (1817) and *Cloudesley* (1830), were wrung unwillingly from a waning mind to supply a failing purse. He wrote, besides, many stories for children, which possessed a spell for the childhood of at least two generations.

Godwin was almost the only man of high distinction who wrote novels in his generation. But the crowd of women novelists included several who belonged to the revolutionary group, though rather on its educational than on its political side, two who were members of Godwin's immediate circle, and two at least who had occasion to reject his proposals of marriage. Mrs. Opie (Amelia Alderson) had been from girlhood his enthusiastic friend, and her novels (*Father and Daughter*, 1801, *Adeline Mowbray, or Mother and Daughter*, 1804), otherwise not remarkable, show spasmodic symptoms of her interest in his ideas and personality. Mrs. Inchbald, a far abler woman, had published two remarkable tales (*A Simple Story*, 1791, *Nature and Art*, 1796), both strongly infused

A. Opie  
(1769-1853).



with educational ideas. The latter is a sufficiently crude exhibition, in Rousseau's fashion, of the defects of civilized morality; but the former, built upon the unpromising motive of displaying 'the improper education of the unthinking Miss Milner' is a powerful picture of passion, more prophetic of *Jane Eyre* than any other English novel of the eighteenth century. Finally, though on a different level, the veteran Hannah More (1745-1833) made, in 1809, her still well-remembered contribution to the rational education of young women, *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*.

In Maria Edgeworth, who, according to a well-known declaration of her father, aimed in all her writings to promote the progress of education from the 'cradle to the grave,' the educational school of novelists may fairly be said to have culminated. But her very singleness of purpose led her, as in some degree Mrs. Inchbald, to discover new ways missed by writers of less powerful bias. Education meant for her the satirical exposure of every kind of social foible. It also meant, in particular, holding up the mirror to her well-loved country-folks in Ireland. And thus she became, in some sense, both a doctrinaire Miss Austen, and an Irish, yet prosaic, Sir Walter. She was born in 1767, in a home devoted to the cult of Rousseau, to whom her father, in 1771, introduced an elder brother as a realized Emile. Her strong commonsense and Irish humour suggested in after years many qualifications to Rousseau's enthusiastic extravagances. She revolted, in particular, like Mary Wollstonecraft, from his sentimental treatment of the education of girls. But the bias remained. Her first writings were didactic treatises (*Letters to Literary Ladies*, 1795, *Practical Education*, 1798) and stories for children. At length, in 1800-1801, she addressed a larger

M. Edgeworth  
(1767-1849).

public with *Belinda* and *Castle Rackrent*. The first, though far from the best of her books, is full of piquancy to the student of ideas. *Belinda* herself, Miss Edgeworth's ideal, is a somewhat shadowy creation thrown into relief by three vigorous, if somewhat coarsely drawn, embodiments of what she disapproves. Lady Delacour is the frivolous woman of society; Harriet Freke, a burlesque vindicator of the rights, and scorner of the modesty, of women, marks where Miss Edgeworth parted company with Mary Wollstonecraft; Virginia, an artless maiden brought up in idyllic innocence in the New Forest, who cannot read and 'has never spoken to a man,' marks where she parts company with Rousseau. In *Castle Rackrent*, under a less pretentious form, she attains a far greater result. Her sense of the defects of the Irish character was so blended with warm-hearted delight in it, that the dreary tale of follies, seen through the medium of the old Irish servant's mind, gathers an atmosphere of pathetic charm. These two books, which immediately became popular on both sides of the Channel, contain in the germ almost all Miss Edgeworth's later work. For more than twenty years she poured forth from the patriarchal household at Edgeworthstown, tales of fashion, tales of Irish life, tales for the young, whose least merit was to be a perpetual fountain of good sense in half the homes of the land. Her *Popular Tales* appeared in 1804, *Leonora*, 1806, the two series of *Tales from Fashionable Life* in 1809-12, *Patronage* in 1813, *Harrington and Ormond*, 1817, *Rosamond* and *Harry and Lucy*, 1822-25. She is best when, as in the *Absentee*, she is at once chastening the fashionable world and painting, with that 'rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact,' which excited the generously confessed emulation of Scott, the life of her own countrymen. The worst features of Irish society

were, happily, not to be paralleled in Scotland; but the hamlet of Tullyveolan, in the eighth chapter of *Waverley*, bears some resemblance to Lord Glenthorn's squalid village; and the picture of the rent-day at the Absentee's castle, with the agent installed in my lady's boudoir, and the crowded peasants filling the state-rooms 'with a smell of great coats,' is one which Scott might have excelled in picturesque charm, but not in force. Her more purely fashionable tales—such as *Ennui* and *Manceuvring*—suffer more from the moral animus which their titles aggressively announce. The manceuvrer does nothing but manceuvre, the *ennuyé* is unrelaxing in *ennui*; the master-passion never flags, has no intervals of hesitation or regret, and displays itself with transparent candour under all conditions. The indefatigable educator is always at hand, compelling her puppets to consistency in error. But, with all this, what wealth of invention and liveliness of touch! It is not for nothing that a generation peculiarly impatient of tales with a tendency has restored to her something of the fame she enjoyed in her own, and that a gifted novelist of a different school has included her in her charming *Book of Sibyls*.

Sydney Owenson (afterwards Lady Morgan) was the daughter of a talented Irish actor and patriot, and inherited something of both attributes. At the most susceptible age she witnessed the stirring tragedy of the revolt and its suppression. Then, falling back upon a national possession which could not be suppressed, she anticipated Moore in writing verses for Irish melodies, and the more famous poet honourably acknowledged her priority. Delight in Irish songs—'the true music of the heart'—is accordingly a trait of the heroine of Miss Owenson's first novel, *St. Clair, or the Heiress of Desmond* (1802), a faint feminine reflex

Lady Morgan  
(about 1778-1859).

of *Werther*, which, as such, repays study. In 1805 she came forward, in her own phrase, 'like a fairy Amazon armed against a host of gigantic prejudices,' with *The Wild Irish Girl*, a genuine, if somewhat excited, effort to vindicate 'Irish virtue, Irish genius, and Irish heroism.' A series of *Patriotic Sketches* followed in 1807. An unfortunate deviation into pseudo-Hellenism, *Ida of Athens* (1809), was succeeded in 1814 by *O'Donnel*, a vivacious and often highly effective satire upon the English in Ireland, which, in spite of its fervent advocacy of Catholic Emancipation, won the admiration of Scott by its very rich and entertaining comic scenes. After the war Lady Morgan visited Paris with her husband, and upon her return promptly produced an eloquent, though loosely reasoned, exposure of the Legitimist government (*France*, 1816), which provoked a furious onslaught from the *Quarterly*. She replied, with pardonable incisiveness, in *Florence MacCarthy* (1819), where her bitter enemy, Croker, figures grotesquely enough as Councillor Crawley. During the last decade of our period Lady Morgan's salon was a focus of letters, fashion, and emancipation in Dublin. There the 'Irish de Staël,' as a contemporary notice tells us, 'hardly more than four feet high, with round lustrous eyes, close-cropped hair, and red Celtic cloak fastened by a Tara brooch,' received among others the melancholy author of *Melmoth*. Her last important novel, *The O'Briens and O'Flahertys* (1827), evinces like Maturin's last, *The Albigenses* (1825), the overpowering prestige of the 'Scotch novels.' The stormy events of 'Ninety-eight' are treated with a palpable recollection of *Old Mortality*; O'Brien, the 'student-volunteer,' is a more romantically conceived Morton. Lady Morgan lived nearly a generation longer, vivacious, important, patriotic to the last. A new race of reviewers forgave the aberrations of 'the wild Irish girl,' and in her last years her famous re-

usal to reveal the year of her birth became a pleasant jest in the literary world.

To these two definitely marked groups neither of the two supreme creative artists of the period, Jane Austen and Walter Scott, had any close relation. Miss Edgeworth attracted Scott as a painter of national life, not as a theorist. Theories played little part in his concrete intellect, and were jealously excluded from the sphere of her impersonal art. Rousseau probably stood to both for a Frenchman of bad reputation; and Mrs. Radcliffe was not in reality very much nearer to Scott, who took over into his vast human symphony an air or two founded upon her simple themes, than to Miss Austen, who stood irreconcilably apart, mimicking them in undertones of fastidious laughter.

The recorded life of Jane Austen has been compared in its absence of salient detail to Shakespeare's. In his case we instinctively distrust the record, and fill out its tame outlines with cloudy symbols of high romance. In hers we feel the quietness to be significant and expressive. Born at the rectory of Steventon, Hampshire, in 1775, she passed the first twenty-five years of her life, with little variation, in that secluded village. There, between October, 1796, and August, 1797, she wrote *Pride and Prejudice*, and, in immediate succession, *Sense and Sensibility* (1797), and *Northanger Abbey* (1798). In 1801 her father left Steventon, but after eight years of more varied life, spent chiefly at Bath, resumed seclusion in a cottage at Chawton. Here the second group of her novels was written—*Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*. The last is touched with autumn; and soon after its completion, in 1816, Jane Austen entered upon the decline which ended with her life, at Winchester, in 1817.

'Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on,' she once wrote, in a letter; and this expresses with much exactness the nucleus, if not precisely the limits, of her art. The easy aimless life of rural gentility in those days, securely well-to-do and complacently unambitious, disdaining business, and untouched by ideas, was of course no new topic in the English novel. But Richardson and Fielding had drawn upon it chiefly for romantic incident: Miss Austen gave the charm of romance to its unromantic routine. None of her predecessors belonged so entirely, so exclusively, to the society which she drew. The peculiar delicacy and archness of her satire were only possible to one who was not only familiar from childhood with the objects of it, but whose social instincts and sympathies were in the main the same. She criticises her society from the inside, and her critical keenness is quite untouched by reforming ardour. It cannot be said that she exactly puts breeding above character, but she notes its subtlest varieties with even finer precision, and it enters even more largely into the moral chiaroscuro of her work. She shares the serene detachment of her society from the world of strenuous effort and intellectual ardour. Her exquisite literary tact was the fruit of no long literary apprenticeship, but of a perfectly balanced nature. She delights in Richardson, in Cowper, in Crabbe, but as a kindred spirit, not as a disciple; and she makes no effort to pass the limits which mark off her path from theirs. She has quick sensibilities, but never accentuates emotion, like Richardson; she is alive to natural beauty, but never preaches it like Cowper; she feels for poverty and squalor, but keeps it, like her tragedy and her crime, in the background, instead of parading and exposing it as is the wont of Crabbe. This reticence distinguishes her as much as anything else

from the one literary school towards which she assumes a deliberately hostile attitude—that of Mrs. Radcliffe. The terrorists used reticence only as a means of suggestion; Miss Austen's reticence is that not of calculated aposiopesis, but of high-bred reserve. She has no effusive descriptions, furnishes no inventory of her heroines' charms or dress; records, as a rule, no details of travel, and makes 'exploring' immortally ridiculous in the person of Mrs. Elton. She is distinguished not only from Scott, but from Miss Edgeworth, by her slight sense of locality. She does not paint an English community as they painted Scottish and Irish ones; she rather avoids those very elements of the population in which the local flavour, the breath of the soil, is most pronounced. The *personnel* of her books is much the same whether the scene is laid at Steventon or at Bath. Her conception of character is as remote from the higher as from the lower Romanticism. With all her declared taste for 'intricate' characters, she habitually paints in clear and definite monochrome; eschewing the mystery of half-lights as much as the slovenliness of blurred outlines. She loved intricacy only that she might delineate it with the clearness of a mosaic. She never, like George Eliot, suggests a soul of goodness in her evil things. There is no reverse side to Lady Catherine. She draws distinctions of character with exquisite lucidity, but shows little concern to trace latent affinities. The tie of kinship is often with her reducible to qualities derived from common social status. The wonderful Bennet household, for instance, is imagined with more comic force than psychological consistency. 'Sense' and 'Sensibility' are sisters chiefly in affection.

Perhaps the most perfect literary artist of our period, Jane Austen thus belongs to the pre-Romantic age. She is the fine flower of the expiring eighteenth century, abso-

lutely English, almost provincial, in her instincts, her standpoint, her scenery, Greek in her arrowy wit, her delicate irony, her absolute clearness.

Only one later writer in our period at all resembles Miss Austen; and no more fitting niche can be found for the less potent yet exquisite genius of Miss Mitford than by her side, unless it were in the neighbourhood of Charles Lamb. Mary Russell Mitford's most lasting work belongs, in fact, to the borderland of the novel and the essay. Novels proper she wrote, also several dramas of considerable merit, two of them, *Julian* and *Rienzi*, being performed with success at Drury Lane. None of these products of a vaulting literary ambition now competes for fame with the series of unpretending sketches which she contributed to the *London Magazine*, and which were finally collected under the title *Our Village*.

No such intimate and sympathetic portrayal of village life had been given before, and perhaps it needed a woman's sympathetic eye for little things to show the way. Of the professional story-teller on the alert for a sensation there is as little as of the professional novelist on the watch for a lesson. We are not brought into intimacy with Miss Mitford's village, as with Crabbe's, by a formal chronicle of its crimes and sorrows, its scandal and romance. The incident is often of the slightest—a boys' game, a walk with a dog or a child through sunshine or shower, a search for spring flowers, a furtive peep at the old home; but these things of little moment are so vividly irradiated with the personality of one to whom they meant much, that for us too they become vital and enduring. Of Miss Austen's causticity, of her irony, she has nothing; but she is hardly inferior to her in a delicate precision of touch rarely found in natures so effusive, and of which in the descriptive



prose of the time there is hardly another example. It was in directions totally alien to those pursued by these exquisite miniature painters that the great master, who paid his tribute to Miss Austen's art as 'the most wonderful he ever knew' across a gulf impassable for either, led the great body of contemporary novelists.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, August 15th, 1771.

W. Scott  
(1771-1832). His ancestry connected him with the turbulent heroes of border warfare; his parentage with the professional and literary life of the capital. His boyhood was spent beside the famous border-stream which was to be a main region of his song, and the neighbour of his two best-loved homes. At thirteen, Percy's *Reliques*—the Bible of the Romantic reformation—took possession of him, and gave a determining bent to his enormous assimilative power. Blending in an unexampled degree the instincts of the poet and the antiquary, he absorbed during his early manhood all the floating treasure of Scottish legend and song, and mastered, so far as was then possible, the mass of historic and customary lore involved in it. But no man every pored over the past with a heartier delight in the present. His 'raids,' as a student, into the historic borderland in search of old ballads were progresses from one hospitable farm to another; and the songs upon which he 'seized like a tiger,' or the border-relics he triumphantly carried home, were not more important than the fast friendships he made in the process with many a Dandy Dinmont of real life. The collector of the 'Border Minstrelsy' was unconsciously 'making' the creator of the novels. And the romances gathered in these jaunts came to him with an aroma of open air, a background of heath and glen, which in his hands they never lost. Called to the bar in 1792, he won renown among the young Edinburgh advocates chiefly as the prince

of story-tellers, spending, nevertheless, among the dusty purlieus of the Scottish law hours not less fruitful to the future novelist than were his days on the Liddesdale heather. Two extra-legal pursuits—the cavalry troop, and the German class—had, however, a more immediate bearing on his work. Scott never saw war, but his zeal for military exercise, long after the fear of invasion was past, provided him with an experience to which *Marmion*, in after years, was to owe much more than the ring of its light-horseman verse. Nor did he ever master German, but he learned enough to make his own all, perhaps, in German literature, that would in any case have appealed to him. His vital contact with it hardly went beyond a few ballads of Bürger and Goethe, and a historical tragedy of Goethe's.

His translation of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*, which occupied much of 1798, was stiff and not very scholarly in execution. It failed to attract notice, not entirely through its own demerits, for the knell of whatever called itself German drama had just been sounded by Canning's irresistible parody, the *Rovers*, though the brilliant technique of Kotzebue for some time longer held the stage. Scott's *House of Aspen*, written probably soon after, was his last essay in this field. The winter of 1798-99 proved a turning-point in his career. Under the stimulus of two writers ludicrously inferior to himself, he began to write native ballads. In 1798 Joanna Baillie's *Plays of the Passions*, as he wrote to her in 1801, 'put me entirely out of conceit with my Germanised brat; . . . should I ever again attempt dramatic composition, I would endeavour after the genuine Old English model.' This detachment from German influence was indirectly furthered by Matthew Lewis, who in 1798 paid his memorable visit to Edinburgh, flattered the young advocate by his patronizing attentions, and engaged him to supply 'marvellous ballads' for his *Tales*

of Wonder, a suggested version from the German being rejected as wanting 'the *sine quâ non*, a ghost or a witch.' It was under this impulse that Scott, in the summer of 1799, produced his first original ballads. It was also under Lewis's influence that, in 1801, he designed his first prose romance. This was, he tells us, 'a tale of chivalry, in the style of the *Castle of Otranto*, with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident.' A chapter of this survives in the fragment, *Thomas the Rhymer*, published in the general preface to the novels. After the great success of his first metrical romance, in 1805, he made a second experiment in prose. But the verdict of friends was unfavourable, and the first chapters of *Waverley* were laid by and forgotten. Before it was resumed, several slight approaches had been made by others to the creation of a 'Scotch novel.' Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816), in her *Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), and Mary Brunton (1778-1818), gave graphic descriptions of Scottish life, but strictly within the domestic sphere. The purveyors of romantic history were indeed legion; and one of them, Jane Porter, found many readers for her melodramatic version of the story of Wallace, *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810). She had previously produced, under the stimulus of an ardent sympathy for Poland, an equally popular and somewhat more lifelike picture of the heroic Kosciusko, in *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803). In after years Miss Porter chose to declare herself Scott's precursor. But in this case, at least, there were no *fortes ante Agamemnona*. Scott created the English historical novel, and his work differs as much in principle as in merit from all the quasi-historic fiction that he rendered obsolete. The author of *Waverley* had but one genuine precursor, and that was the author of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, of *Marmion*, of *The Lady of the Lake*. These brilliant works belong

primarily to the history of poetry; but they have even more significance in the history of the novel. The most striking evoked a host of imitators. Regarded as poems, they could not claim very high rank, at least in regard to those qualities in which good poetry necessarily differs from a good tale in prose. They had, indeed, an original and vivid manner, with many telling though not subtle metrical effects which at once caught the popular ear. But the greater poets regarded them coldly, and their effect upon the deeper currents of English poetry has been extremely small. Regarded as tales, however, they marked an era. They were the first fine examples of the romantic story, freely embroidered upon a framework of genuine history—whereas the tribe of the Lees and Porters had tried to make history itself romantic, and ruthlessly distorted it in the process.

Nevertheless, the gain was enormous, when, after a few experiments, he definitely laid aside his cleverly constructed armour of verse for the easy undress of his featureless but flexible prose. For Scott's verse, with all its fatal facility, hampered his movement and restricted his expression; he was far too much of a literary Tory to violate tradition, like Wordsworth, and pour into verse all the wealth of realistic detail of which his mind was full. Above all, his humour for the first time found full scope. In resigning verse, Scott was thus exchanging an instrument of few strings, though some of these were of thrilling power, for an organ of vastly greater compass.

The poems had been written mainly at Ashiestiel, the cottage above the Tweed glen, charmingly described in *Marmion*. The beginning of the period of the novels nearly coincides with Scott's settlement at Abbotsford. Twelve years of authorship had made him prosperous beyond any contemporary who lived by his pen. Unpre-

cedented prices had been paid for *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*; and in 1811 he at length succeeded to the lucrative income of the clerkship for which he had served gratuitously five years. He forthwith bought the moorland acres by Tweedside, where as yet only a cottage prophesied of the castle to come; and in May, 1812, a picturesque caravan 'flitted' thither down the valley; 'old swords, bows, targets, and lances' betraying the minstrel of romance, while a motley array of country folks, horses, and dogs, foretold the creator of the novels. It was in February, 1814, that Scott, searching for fishing tackle, stumbled upon the abandoned fragment of *Waverley*. A few weeks' labour sufficed to complete it, and in July it was published anonymously. Its success was immediate. The identity of the author was at once apparent both to acute critics like Jeffrey and to Scott's intimate friends, who had heard half the anecdotes from his lips. But the most confident were staggered by the appearance, seven months later, of a second novel by the author of *Waverley* within a few weeks of a new poem by Mr. Scott. For sixteen years the wonderful series of the 'Scotch novels,' as they were called, issued from the Ballantynes' press without a pause; and for the last ten, at least, their appearance was watched for as eagerly in Paris and Weimar as in London. The poems had thrown the British world into a passing excitement; the novels enlarged the intellectual horizon of all Europe, created in half a dozen nations the novel of national life, and opened a new epoch in the study of history. Hazlitt, who long refused to read the great Tory's tales, and then said the finest things in the world about them, hardly overstated the difference when he declared that 'the poems were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends.'

The twenty-nine novels offer few points of vantage to the literary historian. They show no development of method, no variation of style. *Waverley*, the first chapters apart, is as mature and as full of genius as any of its successors, and in the absence of external evidence, any future 'Scott Society' might be safely defied to discover the order of their production. He poured forth the whole series in the equable noontide of his powers with the facility of a rich mind which has toiled for its riches. His canons of method were few and easy; and no curiosity of exploration tempted him to revise them. If for a moment he set foot upon a province not his own, as in *St. Ronan's Well*, he promptly withdrew it. But his own province was so vast and so unexplored, that he had little inducement to such enterprises; and the history of his work is that of one gradually appropriating his inherited domain, now occupying territory inch by inch, now making a sudden advance towards the frontier, and then again falling back to take completer possession of the ground already familiar. The two most important of such advances serve to divide the novels conveniently into three groups. Scotland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the subject of the first. The second, opening with *Ivanhoe* (1819), adds England and the Middle Ages; the third, opening with *Quentin Durward* (1823), adds the continent.

The first group is an almost unbroken succession of masterpieces. It is curious to find him turning from the great historic canvas of *Waverley* to a plan which shows that he still felt the fascination of the Tale of Wonder. He meant to depict 'the life of a doomed individual whose efforts at virtuous conduct were for ever disappointed by the intervention of some malevolent being.' But his realistic imagination refused to vitalize a conception fitter in fact for a poem than for a novel; and *Guy Mannering* (February,

1815) owes its extraordinary distinction more to its wonderful rendering of the familiar detail of Scottish homestead and tavern, than to the gleams of supernatural light which still linger about the household of Ellangowan and the weird figure of Meg Merrilies. In its successor, too, *The Antiquary* (May, 1816), the romantic intrigue is of vanishing interest compared with the two great creations drawn from the heart of Scottish life,—Oldbuck and Ochiltree,—about which its slender threads are woven. The shrewd old bedesman is a type which Wordsworth's imagination might have shaped into kinship with his philosophic pedlar or leech-gatherer. The difference between Wordsworth's mystical and Scott's humorous sympathy with the peasant is nowhere more palpable.

The next pair of novels was ushered in (December, 1816) with a new mystification, as the first of a series of 'Tales of my Landlord,' published, to the dismay of the 'Napoleon of the press,' no longer by Constable, but by his rival Blackwood. One of these, *The Black Dwarf*, had it stood alone, would hardly have betrayed the secret. Of all great writers Scott was by nature the least of a misanthrope, and only a mastery of the psychology of social revolt, which his hearty delight in life made difficult, could have rendered this story of a converted Timon, in spite of some capital minor sketches, other than tame. By *Old Mortality*, on the other hand, the thin veil of disguise was rent in a moment. The success of *Waverley* was even surpassèd. Six thousand copies were sold in six weeks. On December 14th, Murray reported to Scott the famous reply of Lord Holland when asked his opinion of it: 'Opinion! we did not one of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout!' In the North, indeed, it roused bitter antagonisms. The author of *Bonnie Dundee* had without doubt sought to vindicate Claverhouse, whose portrait filled the place of honour in his study, from

the implacable hatred of his countrymen; nor did he love the Covenanters. But the historian of fiction can say little worse of him than that he portrayed fanaticism not like a fanatic, but with a poet's eye alike for its picturesque eccentricities and for its sublime heroism. *Old Mortality* has won few to the Covenanters' creed, but it has given these heroic Israelites of old Scotland a place in the heart of thousands who would never otherwise have heard of them. In *Rob Roy*, which followed (1817)—(an unusually speaking title, reluctantly adopted at Ballantyne's instance: 'Why should I write up to a name?')—he fell back again upon the deeper-seated race antagonism of Highland and Lowland which still permitted chivalrous intercourse. But the two worlds of business and adventure which diversify the story are very loosely attached, save at one point, where they blend in the fortunes of the immortal Baillie of Glasgow

*Rob Roy* was followed in June, 1818, by a far greater achievement—*The Heart of Midlothian*. The story of Jeanie Deans is perhaps the finest extant rendering of the romance of heroic adventure in terms of modern and homely life; and Jeanie herself is the finest of all Scott's portraits of women. The noble features of the national character are, as Lockhart well says, 'canonized' in her. It was received all over Scotland with unexampled fervour and delight, and England was little behind. A correspondent in the South wrote to him from a house 'where everybody is tearing it out of each other's hands, and talking of nothing else.' Scott thought *The Heart of Midlothian* would make a good *bourgeois* tragedy. Its successor, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (June, 1819), is the nearest approach he was capable of making to *Romeo and Juliet*. Love did not greatly interest Scott; he accepted it as a part of the traditional scheme of romance, a nexus between the 'hero' and the 'heroine;' and, like almost every other element



which he thus took over, it is in most cases of slight effect. Alone in the whole series *The Bride of Lammermoor* represents love with thrilling and tragic intensity. *The Legend of Montrose*, issued at the same time as *The Bride*, and, like it, dictated from a bed of agony, is in reality the legend of Dugald Dalgetty, slight in action, but a most vivid study of those humours of the camp and of the table in which Scott always shone.

Then, in December, came the brilliant *tour de force* which opens the second group. In *Ivanhoe* Scott's observation was of as little avail as his wealth of Border and Highland lore, and although produced as rapidly as usual, it shows some of the traits which distinguish dexterous composition from spontaneous growth. The plot has an obtrusive symmetry which invites, and repays, analysis. Rebecca is a noble and fascinating creation, but beside Jeanie Deans, she is as one of Schiller's women to one of Shakespeare's. In England, however, the first purely English 'Scotch novel' was received with clamorous delight. Scott's English fame reached its climax. From this point the sales of his novels steadily declined. Abbotsford nevertheless continued to rise and its domain to expand at an ever-increasing pace, and the vast sums laid out in the process were in part payments for future novels, of which the very subject was undetermined. For the present, however, this audacity seemed justified. The two years, 1820-21, produced four novels. In *The Monastery* and *The Abbot* Scott laid his hand, somewhat tardily, on the story of the Scottish queen which had fascinated the first great historian of Scotland, and seemed to await her first great novelist. The picture of Mary at Lochleven is a brilliant one. Scott was, however, less at home in the sixteenth than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and blundered grievously in the effort to copy the courtly

tongue of Euphuism. *Kenilworth* (1821) is superior chiefly because Scott had here to deal with one of the most moving stories in English history. A tour among the Hebrides in the summer of 1821 prompted a momentary diversion to the storm-swept crag-scenery of *The Pirate*. But while still limning the weird figure of Norna he was already busy, in high spirits, among the London 'prentices of *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822).<sup>1</sup> The character of James is Scott's masterpiece in historical portraiture. He here found in the highest degree that piquant discrepancy between personal and professional character which his humour delights to exhibit; and he had far too much of that discrepancy in himself to curb his humour when a king was in question, because of his Tory creed. *Peveril of the Peak*, its successor, was received with not undeserved coldness; and some inward misgiving may, as Lockhart thinks, have prompted the daring advance into new ground which resulted in the brilliant success of *Quentin Durward* (1823). The Scottish archer at the French court, 'fier comme un Ecosais,' was, like the Scottish king at Whitehall, an admirable nucleus for picturesque national contrast. The book created a furore at Paris, and contributed more than any of its fellows to evoke the historical romances of Scott's great disciples in France, Russia, and Italy; in particular, Alexis Tolstoi's powerful picture of the court of Ivan the Terrible—a Louis Onze of barbarism. Scott himself, however, with his usual nonchalance, turned away from his triumph to chronicle the small-talk of a neighbouring watering-place, and record reminiscences of his youth; only to show, in *St. Ronan's Well* (1823), that he could not emulate Miss Austen's diamond pen, and in

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart tells how a chapter of *The Pirate* and the opening chapter of *Nigel* were thrown off on two successive mornings of October, 1821.

*Redgauntlet* (June, 1824), that a stirring story is hard to subdue to the epistolary methods of Richardson. For these very reasons, however, these two novels, caviare to the general reader, are attractive to the student of Scott's art. In their successors, *The Betrothed* and *Talisman* (1825), he returned to the Norman cycle of *Ivanhoe* and to the romance of Border warfare, completing in the latter, with unsurpassed *verve*, his striking earlier sketch of Richard, and setting it off with a portrait of Saladin, whom the chivalry of Scott and the liberal humanism of Lessing have thus united to honour.

Before the next novel, *Woodstock*, was finished, Scott was overtaken by the blow which shattered his prosperity, shortened his life, and, notwithstanding, gave him a hold upon the moral sympathy of men which the prodigalities of Abbotsford could never have secured. The commercial crisis of 1825, seconded by the imprudence of all the persons concerned, involved the Ballantynes in bankruptcy, and Scott, as their partner, found himself, early in 1826, a debtor for £117,000. A thrill of sympathy ran through the civilized world. From all sides came offers of help. But Scott, as *dour* as he had been sanguine, rejected all money relief, asked only time, and sat down to the colossal task of paying his debt with his pen. That task he more than half accomplished. Abbotsford ceased to dispense hospitality to Europe, and its owner went to live alone in homely lodgings at Edinburgh. Here he laboured with redoubled industry, completed *Woodstock* (April, 1826), and began the *Chronicles of the Canongate*. If *Woodstock* shows no trace of the crisis he had undergone, all its successors suffer from the nervous strain. Instead of being author till breakfast-time and sportsman or host for the rest of the day, he began to grudge every hour not spent at his desk. Under

such conditions were produced *The Surgeon's Daughter*, *The Fair Maid of Perth* (April, 1828), and *Anne of Geierstein* (May, 1829), with several shorter tales. Other shadows stole upon the aging man. Lady Scott had died in May, 1826; his grandchild—John Hugh of the *Tales of a Grandfather*—was soon to follow; in 1829, his faithful woodman, Tom Purdie, suddenly passed away. Repeated paralytic strokes impaired his powers. *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous* were painfully wrung from a reluctant brain, despite the protests of his publisher, in the course of 1831. In April, 1832, on the eve of his departure for the last vain journey to the South, Wordsworth visited him, and recorded in a noble sonnet the trouble, 'not of clouds or weeping rain,' that hung over Eildon Hill as he set forth. A few months later he was brought back, by slow stages, to die, one September day, in the hearing of Tweed.

Scott's influence upon English novel-writing was so enormous that it is easy to mistake for a literary revolution what was in fact merely an extension of traditional methods to a new field. This great, genial Tory had nothing of the revolutionary temper, even in literature. He was intellectually fast rooted in the eighteenth century—the last and greatest of the race of realists and humorists who created the English novel. It is sometimes said that the rival schools of Romance and real life, of Mrs. Radcliffe and Miss Edgeworth, were blended and reconciled by Scott. This is only a half-truth. There is a sense in which Mrs. Radcliffe was more modern than Scott. She is distantly akin to Wordsworth by virtue of a sense of mystery which Scott wholly lacked. Scott is no more of a mystic than Fielding, and far less 'sentimental' than Sterne. His delight in the past, again, has little in common with her *penchant* for ruined castles and moth-eaten manuscripts.

The past with him was no repertory of wonders, but the present gone by, and bound by countless links to the present that is. What he has in common with the Romantic temper is simply the feeling for the picturesque, for colour, for contrast. He crowds his canvas with details, leaves nothing to the reader's imagination, refuses to detach human nature from its rich investiture of concrete circumstance. Of all great portrayals of character he presents men most persistently *in their habits* as they lived. Profuse description—not merely of lakes and mountains as in Rousseau and Mrs. Radcliffe, but of street and market-place, battlefield, sports, architecture, and banquets, business and ceremony—became in Scott for the first time a regular feature of the novel, and it was one far too imitable not to be eagerly reproduced by his successors. And Scott is linked to the great eighteenth-century novelists, and detached from the Romantics, not merely by his realism but by his *humour*. Awestruck gravity reigns in the castle chambers of Mrs. Radcliffe, broken at most by a forced jest from the servants' hall. The 'wonder,' of which English Romanticism has been described as the revival, excluded humour. The ironical or fantastic world-laughter of Jean Paul belonged to a more developed phase of Romanticism which reached England only with Carlyle. Scott's humour is of a homelier kind. He never distorts life in order to laugh at it, but fastens upon its countless superficial anomalies with a peculiar delight in the jostlings of character and circumstance, always abundant in a community where custom is deep-rooted, and human nature strong:—Councillor Pleydell in the tavern, Baillie Jarvie in the camp, Jeanie Deans mindful of Dumbiedikes' kine in the crisis of her heroic journey, James protesting as 'a free king' against the tyranny of Steenie, or the provost of Dumfries uneasily shuffling out of the

task of arresting the Jacobite fourth-cousin of his dreaded wife. This large and simple humour of Scott's went along with a certain bluntness of perception to which our Alexandrian criticism is peculiarly sensitive. The finest shades, the subtler phases, of character, escape him. His fresh, half-formed natures are apt to be insipid; he needs the mature type, with its rugged incrustations of habit and prejudice to exert his full effect. Hence his young men are usually inferior to his old, his gentles to his professionals, his 'heroes' and 'heroines' to the rogues who, he confessed, commonly won his heart. For development he had hardly any sense. His characters have the brilliance and the fixity of portraits. His plots, swiftly improvised and often hastily wound up, have more mechanical symmetry than organic coherence. It cannot be denied that Scott's work, so instantly famous in his own generation, has become less interesting to ours. He appeals to us neither by perfection of art, like Miss Austen, nor by sheer intellectual charm, like Peacock. He illustrates no ideas and tackles no problems. But all these real drawbacks are trifling in the presence of creative power so colossal as his. No other British novelist has drawn a body of characters so life-like and so various; and no country but his own has had its past and its present, its highland and its lowland, its peasants and its citizens, its heroes and its martyrs, the very stuff of its people, the very genius of its soil, imperishably recorded by the labour of one man.

Among the crowd of novelists who appeared in the wake of Sir Walter and did work akin to his were two of great merit who cannot be called his followers. Susan Ferrier and John Galt had both written 'Scotch novels' before the appearance of *Waverley*, though neither published till some years later; Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, according to a well-known

anecdote, having been rejected by publishers on the ground that 'Scotch novels could not pay.' Both were friends of Scott, who generously commended one of Galt's poor tragedies, in an epilogue, to the patient ears of an Edinburgh audience; while his own last years were brightened by the delicate sympathy of Miss Ferrier.

Susan Edmonstone Ferrier, sprung like himself of the order of 'writers to the signet,' was born in Edinburgh. But she made her way to her proper domain—the novel of Scottish manners—through no such intervening halo of romance. Scotland revealed itself to her neither in wild Border ballads, nor in the vast historical dramas of the Covenant or the Forty-five, but in the picturesquely mingled society of country-houses and Edinburgh drawing-rooms. The smaller Scottish gentry still contained figures like her Mrs. MacShake and the ladies of Glenfern, incomparable in their blending of antique state and dignity with the rich vernacular of the peasant; and of such types Miss Ferrier, far more than Scott, is the portrayer. Her father's position as agent to the Duke of Argyll gave her admirable opportunities of studying the fashionable class of her characters, both being frequent guests at Inverary. Her *Marriage* appeared in 1818, *Inheritance* in 1824; *Destiny* in 1831. Like Galt, and most of the strictly Scottish novelists, except Scott, she drew English types with far less skill, though it is a point of method with her to bring the two into sharp and piquant juxtaposition.

John Galt, born in Ayrshire, passed his early years in business at Greenock. During the most critical years of the war, 1809-11, he enjoyed some adventurous travelling in the Mediterranean, in the course of which he met with Byron, in after years an enthusiastic reader of his *Entail*. Literature and

J. Galt  
(1779-1839).

order of 'writers to the signet,' was born in Edinburgh. But she made her way to her proper domain—the novel of Scottish manners—through no such intervening halo of romance. Scotland revealed itself to her neither in wild Border ballads, nor in the vast historical dramas of the Covenant or the Forty-five, but in the picturesquely mingled society of country-houses and Edinburgh drawing-rooms. The smaller Scottish gentry still contained figures like her Mrs. MacShake and the ladies of Glenfern, incomparable in their blending of antique state and dignity with the rich vernacular of the peasant; and of such types Miss Ferrier, far more than Scott, is the portrayer. Her father's position as agent to the Duke of Argyll gave her admirable opportunities of studying the fashionable class of her characters, both being frequent guests at Inverary. Her *Marriage* appeared in 1818, *Inheritance* in 1824; *Destiny* in 1831. Like Galt, and most of the strictly Scottish novelists, except Scott, she drew English types with far less skill, though it is a point of method with her to bring the two into sharp and piquant juxtaposition.

commerce were throughout crossed and blended in his life. A series of tragedies which he published in 1812 were judged, even by Scott, who, as Lockhart says, 'over-estimated all contemporary merit except his own,' the worst ever produced. Galt's career virtually began with the publication, after several abortive experiments, of his *Ayrshire Legatees* in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1821. Moore's *The Fudge Family in Paris*, and Lockhart's *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, had given a vogue to the humours of the travelling Briton; but Galt's *Legatees* has more affinity to *Humphrey Clinker*. The Scottish minister's and his wife's experiences in London, e.g., his visit to an oratorio and anxiety lest report should describe him as having been 'a witness to the chambering and wantonness of ne'er-do-weel play-actors,' are very happily conceived. *Blackwood* encouraged Galt to pursue this vein, whereupon he drew from his desk an abandoned work begun eight years before. This was the admirable *Annals of the Parish*, a prose *Parish Register* illuminated with a humour to which Crabbe was strange. Three other excellent studies of Scottish life rapidly followed: *The Provost*, 1822, a similar picture from the standpoint of the magistrate instead of the minister, *Sir Andrew Wylie*, 1822, and *The Entail*, 1823. In describing the unromantic detail of provincial or parish life, Galt is hardly inferior to Scott, but the province or the parish is his exclusive domain; while in the background of Scott's most vivid pictures of the country-side we are aware of the moving pageant of national life. Hence Galt's attempt to rival Scott in the historical novel (*Ringhan Gilhaize*, 1823, *The Spae-wife*, 1823, *Rothelan*, 1824) was futile. A residence in Canada (1826-1829), in the service of the Canada Company, involved him in serious financial difficulties, but enabled him to take literary possession of soil as virgin to the novelist as to the farmer in *Lawrie Todd* (1830), the story of



a Scottish emigrant. Galt, whose vein, if not very various, flowed freely, produced before 1834 several other novels, as well as a poor life of Byron and memoirs of himself. He lived several years longer, a paralytic cripple, and died at Greenock in 1839.

The trend of Scottish fiction in the later years of Scott was decidedly rather towards the domestic or *bourgeois* novel

of Galt and Ferrier. D. M. Moir, of Musselburgh, the 'Delta' of *Blackwood*, was Galt's friend and biographer, and the author of the *Life of Mansie Waugh, Tailor in Dalkeith*, 1828.

Andrew Picken, of Paisley and Glasgow, in his *Tales and Sketches of the West of Scotland* (1824), *The Sectarian* (1829), and *The Dominie's Legacy* (1830), utilized with much satirical verve the

rich materials of Scottish religious life. Even before the death of Scott the current of Scottish fiction set more and more strongly towards the painting of domestic manners, in which no influence of the *Waverley* series is to be seen. Wilson's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* have little

affinity to any other contemporary Scottish work. They are of the school of Wordsworth rather than of Scott; portraying the Scottish peasant with a poetic ideality which is heightened by the sparing use of dialect. But Wilson's imagination was hardly penetrating enough to justify this method, and his tales—including the beautiful *Trials of Margaret Lyndsay*—illustrate rather his tenderness than his strength.

In Ireland, the birthplace of the national novel, the example of Scott told yet more powerfully. Irish Novels. Miss Edgeworth and Lady Morgan were still writing. But a new generation had arisen in whose hands the Irish novel acquired much of the quality most wanting in Miss Edgeworth's work—the

finer romance which Scott elicited from the life of his people by his richer appreciation of its traditional picturesque, instinctive, irrational, and lyric elements. Most of them were young poets, born of or among the peasants, and steeped from childhood in an atmosphere of folk-lore,

M. Banim  
(1796-1874).

suffering, and song. John and Michael Banim formed the deliberate design, in 1822, of being the Scotts of their country. The first-fruits of the plan were the *O'Hara Tales*

J. Banim  
(1798-1842).

(1825), followed by *The Croppy* (1828), a diffuse but powerful tale of Ninety-eight. Both brothers were deeply stirred by the griefs of Ireland, and rendered with unprecedented force those pathetic ground-tones of Irish humour, to which the somewhat gross ear of the English public has only of late become keenly sensitive. John Banim wrote, besides other tales, some lyrics of genuine charm, *The Celt's Paradise* (1821),—a significant contrast between the Christian and the Celtic otherworld,—and other things. The elder brother, whose talent in prose fiction was not inferior, effaced himself with rare generosity and only too complete

G. Griffin  
(1803-1840).

success. Gerald Griffin's career was yet briefer than his friend, John Banim's. Flinging himself early and for awhile vainly upon

the London literary world, he began, about 1827, to utilize the tales of his native Munster (*Munster Popular Tales*, 1827; *Tales of the Munster Festivals*, two series, 1828-9). The most famous of these was the *Collegians*, where a somewhat melodramatic story of the Amy Robsart type serves as framework for a profusion of admirable studies in Irish peasant character. Some of the shorter and earlier tales,

T. Crofton Croker  
(1798-1854).

such as *The Half-Sir*, are excellent, and penetrated with Irish folk-lore. T. Crofton Croker presented Irish folk-lore with

less of literary manipulation, and is remembered less

for his few professed tales than for his classical collections, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, 1827; *Legends of the Lakes* [of Killarney] 1828. A somewhat older teller of Irish tales than any of them, William Carleton, barely falls into this period by virtue of his *Traits and Stories* (1830). But he is the most rare and imaginative spirit among them all, and almost wholly devoid of the element of melodrama to which the Celt in his ardent mood is apt to incline.

To follow Scott in the *historical* novel was more difficult, and it was only abroad—in France, Germany, Italy, and Russia—that his example evoked within his lifetime work which in any point equalled or surpassed his own. His most conspicuous imitators in England, G. P. R. James<sup>1</sup> and Harrison Ainsworth,<sup>2</sup> were talented and prolific journeymen whose work has no pretensions to compare in literary rank with the masterpieces of Manzoni, Hauff, or A. Tolstoi. It is, nevertheless, vastly superior to any English historical fiction preceding Scott. Both had learned from Scott what none of his predecessors suspected, that some detailed knowledge of historical sources, some groping among contemporary memoirs and chronicles, is of service to the historical novelist. Both also carry to an extreme the failings so pronounced in the Carlylean Scott, so faintly suggested in Scott himself—the drawing of character from the outside, the absorbing care for picturesque and lively adventure, the pervading want of soul. Lockhart followed his father-in-law with more originality in *Valerius* (1821), a sort of Roman *Old Mortality*, immeasurably less rich

<sup>1</sup> George Payne Rainsford James (1801-1860), *History of the Life of Edward, the Black Prince*, 1822; *Richelieu*, 1828, etc.

<sup>2</sup> William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882).

in invention, yet noble in its simpler way. Five years later *Woodstock* received a more direct counterpart in the *Brambletye House* of Horace Smith (1826). Even in the novel of modern English life, however, where Scott's subjects were of slight avail, his bold contrasts, rich colouring, and abounding incident had a palpable vogue. To 'do the big bow-wow' was a proclivity which the whole *Waverley* period shared with its great master, as it shared in greater or less degree his corresponding incapacity for the fine and unobtrusive art of Jane Austen. It is no delicate miniature-painting, 'two inches wide,' that we meet with in the 'society' novels which became common about 1825—in Theodore Hook's *Sayings and Doings* (1824 and later), Bulwer's *Pelham* (1828), Lister's *Granby* (1826), and Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826-27). The novel of the 'dandy school' was in fact a last development of the picaresque romance which culminated in *Gil Blas*; the interesting disasters being derived from the dissipations of fashionable society, while the attractions of the hero were heightened by intellectual accomplishments painted, especially by Disraeli and Bulwer, from a lavish palette. *Pelham* and *Vivian Grey* open the reign in fiction of the intellectual dandy; and both books owe some of their piquancy to self-portraiture.

The picaresque flavour was still more pronounced in two romances which stand, in our period, quite alone. Thomas Hope, the son of an English merchant long settled in Amsterdam, belongs to the school of Byron rather than of Scott, and the reviewers confidently attributed his *Anastasius* (1819) to Byron himself instead of to the distinguished virtuoso in furniture and costume, its accredited author. *Anastasius*, the modern Greek, belongs to the race of Byronic heroes of which the sponsors were Mrs. Radcliffe and Dr. John

T. Hope  
(1770-1831).

Moore (*Zeluco*); and the palates excited a few years before by the 'thousand crimes' of a *Lara* or *Corsair* found a kindred zest in Hope's vivid pictures of Eastern rascaldom, and in his brilliant rhetorical style. Hope's father had married into the wealthy *bourgeoisie* of Amsterdam, and he perhaps inherited his not then very English delight in luxuriant artistic detail.

The glory of Anastasius, like that of the *Laras* and *Corsairs*, is now somewhat tarnished, and for a like reason. *Hajji Baba*, on the other hand, has passed into the region of the classics. James Justinian Morier was also the son of a Dutch mother, his father being of Huguenot descent. His extraordinary intimacy with Persian life and language was obtained during two residences there as private secretary to the missions of Sir Harford Jones (1808-9), and Sir Gore Ouseley (1810-15). The adventures of *Hajji Baba* appeared in 1824, the second series, his adventures in England, in 1828. *Zohrab the Hostage* (1832) and *Aysha* (1834) alone among Morier's later novels sustained the reputation won by his first. *Hajji Baba* has often been compared to *Gil Blas*, and the comparison is difficult to avoid. Morier's work was, however, studied from the life, not from books, by a keen and caustic yet not unsympathetic observer, and Persian scholars and travellers have testified to its almost flawless fidelity. The narrative is extraordinarily vivacious, rapid and pointed; the character-drawing full of variety and effect, though hardly subtle or profound; the scenery and atmosphere rendered with slight but telling touches.

From these practitioners of the romance of adventure—a scanty band chosen from the multitude of the unnamed—we turn finally to the more original writer who posed as the arch-scoffer at Romanticism, yet bore within so fine a core of unconfessed romance.

Thomas Love Peacock, like Ben Jonson, to whom he has some affinity, became one of the best classic scholars of his day without the aid of universities, whose capacity of 'removing knowledge' was a perennial topic of his caustic wit. At sixteen, after a fair schooling, he was let loose upon the British Museum, and during several years spent his time in exploring there the art and literature of the classical world. The classics coloured his style but not his tastes; and his first considerable piece of verse, *The Genius of the Thames* (1810) which has fairly been called 'the last production of the eighteenth century,' was the result of a quite modern tramp along its banks from end to end.

Early in 1810 he penetrated into the wilder scenery of North Wales, henceforth a second Hellas to his imagination by its mountains and its myths. There he met his Welsh wife of nine years later (Shelley's 'Snowdonian antelope') and, in November, 1812, Shelley himself. Shelley was the single sympathetic link between Peacock and the greater poets of his time, as Peacock himself was to be between Shelley and the cultivated bureaucracy of England. Both owed much to their friendship. Peacock's lively feeling for landscape was a point of access for Shelley's more glowing sense of beauty; and Shelley, a Platonist by birth and a scholar by education, responded instantly to the stimulus of Peacock's Attic culture.

Peacock in the meantime was casting about for the fit expression which he had obviously not yet found. He translated Greek choruses with a curiously timid adherence to English convention; composed 'comedies and farces' (never published), thin elegiac stanzas (*Inscription for a Dell*), and satire (*Sir Proteus*, 1814) rather ferocious than effective.

The year 1815-16 was a turning-point for Peacock as

for Shelley, now neighbours by the Windsor Thames. Their studies were, as Hogg, who often joined them, put it, 'a mere Atticism.' Here, almost simultaneously with Shelley's *Alastor*, grew into shape Peacock's *Headlong Hall* (published 1816). It marks, Dr. Garnett has justly said, Peacock's literary emancipation, as *Alastor* does Shelley's. 'It shows his final recognition of his deficient appreciation of form, and the futility of his efforts to construct a comedy.'<sup>1</sup> *Headlong Hall* is at once the slightest and the most artificial of Peacock's novels. But he here discovered one of the two situations in which he is great,—the modern 'comedy of Humours,' displayed without restraints of plot in the easy undress symposia of a bachelor's mansion. But he differs from the great Elizabethan 'humorist,' Jonson, and still more from the author of *Pickwick*, in that his humours are predominantly those of the intellectual world, and almost exclusively those of the well-bred. The personages of *Headlong Hall* are still little more than mouthpieces of contending theories, and are drawn at times with boyish violence of touch and ignorance of life. But every element of the Peacockian novel is present in the germ, and the style has already that 'lightness, chastity and strength' for which Shelley afterwards found no praise adequate in *Nightmare Abbey*. The piquant little tale had a great success, and was soon followed by the more ambitious and elaborate romance of *Melincourt* (1817), where the Hellenic humanist pokes somewhat stilted fun at the naked savage of Rousseau and the gold (and paper) corruptions of modern Christendom. Nowhere is the Tory strain that complicates Peacock's Liberal sentiment more completely in abeyance than in the crackling derision of the Placemen's quintet, written when the cry for Reform was rising into

<sup>1</sup> Garnett, Introduction to Peacock's works

menace, and when Shelley's companionship was still recent.

More peculiarly Peacockian was the novel of the next year, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). The satire is now transferred from theories to sentiment. Like Jonson in his day, Peacock sports grimly with the various contemporary forms of 'blue devils' which irritated his Attic urbanity. In the Abbey, situate amid a monotony of dykes and wind-mills, the atrabilious Glowry dispenses a morbid hospitality to illustrious and like-minded guests. The portraits of the metaphysical pessimist (Coleridge), and the sentimental pessimist (Byron), are in the finest style of literary caricature. Still more interesting is the fantasia upon Shelley and his relations with Harriet and Mary, both of whom Peacock knew. Shelley himself read the book with keen relish. He condemned, on the other hand, as 'of the correct, classical school,' his friend's elaborate *Rhododaphne* (1818), a poem classical, however, in Landor's sense, not in Pope's, and suggestive, like *Gebir*, of half-suppressed Romantic affinities. These affinities asserted themselves with vigour in the two prose novels which next ensued. Already in August, 1818, he was absorbed in *Maid Marian* (published 1822), 'a comic romance of the twelfth century,' as he describes it to Shelley, 'which I shall make a vehicle for much oblique satire on all the oppressions that are done under the sun.'

As a genial cynic who believed that nine-tenths of society were moved by force, gold, and appetite, he drew with keen delight his fancy picture of a society in which these primary instincts were frankly avowed and acted on, without the hypocrisy of form, ceremony, and paper 'promises to pay.' But the greenwood world of Robin Hood possessed a deeper charm for this born lover of sylvan solitudes, this haunter of glen and dingle; and the 'vehicle of oblique



satire,' with its plentiful investiture of quips and scoffs, is steeped in the poetry of the woods, and strewn with lyrics of singular magic. Before *Maid Marian* was finished, Peacock had been appointed (1819) to the examinership in the India House which he held till 1855, and had married the 'mountain maid,' whose romantic figure is probably reflected in 'Marian' and at least one of his later heroines. His subsequent novels appeared at longer intervals. *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829) is imagined in an even richer vein of mingled satire and poetry. The fascination of the Saxon forest was here replaced by the yet subtler fascination of the legends and the wilds of Wales, which Peacock, like Milton and Gray, but in a manner altogether his own, drew within the sphere of Attic lucidity and grace. If he did not fully apprehend the splendid but incoherent poetry of the old bards, he caught not a little of its spirit in the mellow literary beauty of his songs of Elphin and Taliesin. And in the satiric manipulation of the legendary matter he shows comic genius of the highest order. Tradition furnished merely a vague hint of those admirable comic creations, Seitheny, 'the Welsh Falstaff' as he has justly been called, and Melvas, the militant king, with his war-song, the 'substance,' in Peacock's own phrase, 'of all the appetencies, tendencies and consequences of military glory.'

In his two remaining novels, *Crotchet Castle* (1831) and *Gryll Grange* (1860), Peacock returned to the earlier and easier plan of *Headlong Hall*. These later galleries of satiric portraiture embody all his often grotesque antipathies in unabated force, but with far riper art; the Scotch, with their paper money, and their *Waverley* novels, and Coleridge with his mysticism, still do penance for their sins against Attic humanism, but in dialogue of truly Attic quality. And the clerical gourmand of *Headlong Hall*—'venter—et praeterea nihil'—is replaced by those delight

ful types of the intellectual epicure, Dr. Folliott and Dr. Opimian.

The Peacockian novel is a distinct *genre* in English literature. Allied in manner to the French philosophical tale of Voltaire and Marmontel, it stands alone in uniting the keen ironic understanding of the eighteenth century with an irrepressible but never fully acknowledged instinct of romance and poetry. In the idealisms of his time Peacock saw only mystification and blue devils, grotesquely discordant with the 'cheerful and solid wisdom of antiquity.' In the Romantic revival itself he saw only the decrepit senilities of the 'Brazen age' of poetry.<sup>1</sup> Not merely Wordsworth and Coleridge, but Byron and Scott, had no more implacable assailant. For sixty years he lived in his choice way, pouring derisive laughter upon 'a world full of fools' (motto to *Gryll Grange*). But the laughter was poured along the veins of old legends, kindling all those latent suggestions of humour which the ardent and passionate spirit of English Romanticism habitually ignored. Peacock was, in fact, one of those few genuine poets in whom humour is the native form of poetry; and thus he, in effect, 'revived' Romance in a manner which assimilates him, at whatever distance, not to Voltaire and Marmontel, but to Aristophanes and Heine.

<sup>1</sup> His *Four Ages of Poetry* justified its existence by provoking Shelley's noble *Defence of Poetry* (1821).

## CHAPTER VI.

### DRAMA.

THE drama of the age of Wordsworth has a mainly pathological interest, as the one region of letters in which Romanticism failed. The greater part of it falls into one of two categories: plays which are not literature, and literary exercises which are not in the fullest sense plays. And its history may be summed up, in a sentence, as the impact of successive waves of Romantic method and *motif* upon the solid intrenchments of theatrical tradition; with the result that, while the grosser and baser elements found ready entrance, the finer and more poetic were stubbornly beaten back, and only towards the close of the period began to filtrate perceptibly through.

The stage drama in the last decade of the eighteenth century had practically ceased to be a branch of literature. The classic masterpieces of Sheridan and Goldsmith were still fresh, and Sheridan himself still alive; but in the hands of the purely professional playwrights of the revolutionary period the comic drama became but a distorted caricature of the high comedy of Molière and Congreve, which it had for a moment recalled. Sheridan's wit had, in fact, raised the standard of *vis comica* to a pitch which inferior men strove to satisfy by contortion and grimace. Mannerism and mimicry, tawdry sentiment and puns became sys-

tematic and habitual; and a style oscillating spasmodically between rhetoric and slang took the place of Sheridan's brilliant comic prose. Comedy, in short, became farce. Character-drawing is reduced to a mechanical repetition of single traits. Thus, in Morton's *Cure for the Heartache* (1824), the Nabob and his daughter are absurd caricatures of the *nouveau riche*, and Farmer Oatland an utterly unreal compound of rusticity and fashion,—a conception far beyond Morton's powers to execute. The process of decline was accelerated by two outward circumstances: the concurrence of a series of great comedians—Liston, Emery, Mathews, Elliston, Mrs. Jordan, Dowton Lewis, Munden—whose talents made the coarsest materials effective; and a systematic collusion between the press and the stage, which, until the rise of Hunt, gave the worst play a show of success. Gifford had some justification for including the drama in the general Dellacruscan epidemic. 'All the fools in the kingdom,' he wrote, 'seem to have risen up and exclaimed with one voice—Let us write for the theatres!' and Hunt, whose trenchant exposure of the venality of criticism first checked that abuse, quoted approvingly this snarl of his future foe '*a man of vigorous learning and the first satirist of the day.*'

The most conspicuous of these playwrights were John O'Keeffe (1746-1833), George Colman the younger (1762-1836), Mrs. Inchbald (1753-1821), Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), Frederick Reynolds (1765-1841), and Thomas Morton (1764?-1838). O'Keeffe, Reynolds, and Morton were prolific improvisators. O'Keeffe's *Wild Oats* (1791) was the type of the long series of 'commercial' comedies, which had a vogue in the early years of the century;—'nothing but gentlemen in distress, and hard landlords, and generous interferers, and fathers who got a great deal of money, and sons who

spent it'—is Hunt's summary description of them. Famous examples of this class were Holcroft's *Road to Ruin*, and Colman's *The Heir at Law*. George Colman, son of the less noted dramatist of the same name, after a wild career at Westminster and Christ Church, began at twenty to write operatic farces, which were performed under his father's auspices at the Haymarket. Succeeding to the management of that theatre he produced a long series of popular comedies and farces: *Ways and Means*, 1788, *The Mountaineers*, 1793, *The Heir at Law*, 1797, *The Poor Gentleman*, 1802, *Love Laughs at Locksmiths*, 1803, *John Bull*, 1805, and many more. Colman was a very clever manufacturer of comedy. His best characters are ingenious mechanisms constructed upon methods which he is not artist enough to be at any pains to disguise; an oddity, incessantly repeated, a professional trait harped upon in every sentence, are the formulas which, expanded, become a Pangloss (*Heir at Law*) or an Ollapod (*Poor Gentleman*). Colman's sentiment is still more theatrical than his humour. 'He had no faith in sentiment,' as Leigh Hunt says, and so 'he mouthed and overdid it, as a man does when he is telling a lie.' Besides his plays he adventured in the field of burlesque verses, in the manner of Peter Pindar; his *Broad Grins* (1802), *Poetical Vagaries*, and similar collections, have a certain coarse effectiveness, but scarcely belong to literature. Compared with the classical work of Goldsmith in humorous verse they fairly measure the literary decline of the drama in the generation between *She Stoops to Conquer* and *John Bull*. Colman's exuberant wit made him a favourite in fashionable society; and the Regent, on becoming George IV., hastened to appoint him to the office of licenser of plays, which he exercised with a puritan rigour not foreshadowed in his writings.

Upon the stage ruled by Colman and O'Keeffe, there

broke in the last years of the eighteenth century, the apparition of Kotzebue. The 'German Drama.' — a label under which Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, and Kotzebue were impartially confounded—had for nearly a decade attracted the world of letters, when the last named—a profane Marsyas among the divinities of the German Parnassus—took Drury Lane and Covent Garden by storm. For three years, from 1797 to 1800, a Kotzebue furore absorbed the theatrical world. Canning and Frere sounded the knell of 'German drama' in *The Rovers* (1797); but the populace thronged unperturbed to *The Stranger* and *Pizarro*. Literary readers abused, but continued to read. Translations were in extraordinary demand, and a phalanx of translators arose to supply them. Goethe and Lessing had been translated by William Taylor and Walter Scott; but persons of higher literary standing than either, Mrs. Inchbald, M. G. Lewis, and Sheridan, vied in producing rival versions of Kotzebue.<sup>1</sup> Between 1796 and 1801, at least twenty of his plays were translated. *Menschenhass und Reue* appeared in three English versions, *Das Kind der Liebe* in four, *Die Spanier in Peru* in five. With this last piece the triumph of the 'German drama' reached its climax; for Sheridan himself, the quondam satirist of Romantic drama in *The Critic*, came forward, to the amusement of society and the inarticulate rage of Gifford, with an adaptation of it under the name of *Pizarro* (1799). All the incongruities of the pseudo-Romantic histories ridiculed in *The Critic* were, in fact, renewed in a hardly less glaring form; and contemporary satire amused itself by juxtaposing Sheridan's earlier exposure of these defects with his later perpetration of them. Before a year was out, *Pizarro* had gone through

<sup>1</sup> The most prolific, and among the best, of Kotzebue's translators, were B. Thompson and Ann Plumptre.

twenty editions, and been translated back into its original German.

The secret of this phenomenal success was twofold. Kotzebue's comedies are extremely clever, and several still hold the German stage by virtue of sheer wit and stage-craft. And with this accomplished technique he combined a systematic appeal, such as no English playwright had made, at once to democratic and to romantic sentiment. Such an appeal had indeed already been made with far more genius in Schiller's *Robbers* and Goethe's *Götz*, the second more romantic, the first more revolutionary. Such an appeal had been made, too, by Coleridge and Southey in verse, by Holcroft and Godwin in novels; but in English drama the position corresponding to theirs was an empty niche until Kotzebue filled it. Holcroft and Mrs. Inchbald alone among contemporary dramatists stood within the revolutionary sphere; but their plays give slight and casual evidence of it.<sup>1</sup> Kotzebue's entire drama, on the contrary, is founded upon the disparagement of positive law, custom, and culture, in the name of 'Nature.' The creed of Rousseau is enforced without his prophetic fire, and with a yet impurer imagination. 'Natural' love is illustrated by a succession of 'naïve' heroines, far less akin to Miranda than to Emile's Sophie. Ethical distinctions are obliterated by an easy-going indulgence for human nature. A trivial act of charity is allowed to atone for a career of crime. *The Stranger* (*Menschenhass und Reue*), one of the most popular on the English stage, is a plea, rather maudlin than Christian, for the forgiveness of grave wrongs. On the other hand, Kotzebue exposed the anomalies or the immoralities of custom with singular effect. His *Negersklaven* was welcomed by the anti-slavery

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* such a character as the benevolent Haswell, in Mrs. Inchbald's *Such Things Are*.

party, and the English translator dedicated his version to Wilberforce. Finally, the romantic attraction of remote and visionary scenery and locale was added to that of democratic sentiment; and the appeal to 'Holy Nature' told more surely when it came from a Peruvian in the days of Pizarro.

Kotzebue's influence, as an integral force, closed with the century. Political reaction checked the vogue of his democratic ideas. But the melodramatic vein of the 'German drama' flowed on with gathering volume; above all in the plays of Matthew Gregory Lewis, M. G. Lewis (1775-1818), the chief purveyor, in drama as in ballad and romance, of the second-rate wares of Germany.

Lewis had himself translated two of Kotzebue's plays (*Rolla*, 1779, *The East Indian*, 1800); his own *Castle Spectre*, 1797, *Adelgitha*, 1806, *Venoni*, 1809, and others, had a momentary success, but are hardly readable now. The nobler immaturities of Schiller and Goethe supplied grist to the melodramatic mill. *Götz* and the crowd of *Ritterdramen* which it evoked, were fantastically caricatured in Lewis, and somewhat lamely varied in Scott's *House of Aspen*; while the gigantesque shadow of Schiller's *Karl Moor* stretches over a full generation to add its gloom to the hero of Maturin's *Bertram* (1816).

While 'Nature' and 'Romance' in their crudest forms thus ran riot upon the stage, drama was becoming a preoccupation of the men who were about to interpret Romance and Nature in the loftiest poetry of the age. Wordsworth and Coleridge were barely acquainted when each recited to the other a newly composed drama (1797); a few months later *The Borderers* and *Osorio* were offered to, and rejected by, the respective managers of Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The former was, indeed, not designed for the stage, and

Plays of the  
Passions.



though powerfully written, is decidedly wanting in theatrical quality; but it shows an insight, long lacking in the English drama, and presently to become momentous in the *Lyrical Ballads*, into the power of passion to reveal the depths of human nature. It was the tragedy of passion so conceived that chiefly attracted the young writers of the Wordsworth and Coleridge group to drama. They did not disdain sensational incident, and Coleridge could borrow the Inquisition machinery of the Radcliffe-Lewis school in *Osorio*, as Wordsworth had faintly recalled the *Robbers* in the *Borderers*; but they used it as instrumental in the evolution of passion and character. Schiller still had influence, but he was read in the light of Shakespeare, and Kotzebue was wholly ignored. Both poets, however, were to do their highest work elsewhere; and it was reserved for a quiet Scotch lady in Hampstead to work out, with a tenacity only too methodic, the conception she had independently but almost simultaneously arrived at, of 'Plays of the Passions.'

Joanna Baillie produced the first volume of her *Plays in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger passions of the mind* in 1798; a second followed in 1802, a third in 1812. She prefixed a Discourse urging the need in drama of progressive passion, of natural language, ordinary situations, simple construction. Much of this recalls the contemporary discussions of the Stowey poets, as reported by both; but Miss Baillie neither pushed her principles so far nor fused them in so fine a fire of genius. Her 'natural' language is often as insipid as Wordsworth's, but not so crude, her passion has an air of being rather forced upon her characters in compliance with her program than elicited from their circumstances. She had talent, grace, eloquence; and generous fellow-countrymen, like Scott and Wilson, hailed a

J. Baillie  
(1762-1851).

new Shakespeare in 'our Joanna,' while more cautious ones, like Jeffrey and Campbell, pointed out her lack of the fundamental nerve and sinew of tragedy. Only one of her plays, *De Montfort*, for a time held the stage. Her comedies, composed with the laudable design of substituting 'character' for satire, sentiment, and intrigue, had too little of the essential *vis comica* to hold their ground against the lively perversities of the Mortons and Reynolds'.

Miss Baillie had attempted to create a poetical drama. The attempt was renewed with far greater dramatic accomplishment, but equally without poetic genius, by James Sheridan Knowles, born (1784) at Cork. His mother was a Sheridan, his father an Irish variety of that Gracchus-Virginus-Tell type which supplied his earlier heroes. After a brief experiment at medicine, Knowles gravitated to the provincial stage, where—at Waterford, Belfast, and elsewhere—he gathered the indispensable elements of theatrical technique. His career as a dramatist began in 1810, when he wrote for Kean the sketch of *Leo, or the Gipsy*. A year later his *Brian Boroihme, or the Maid of Erin*, was produced at Belfast. In 1815 he entered the field of historical tragedy, then once more becoming popular, with *Caius Gracchus*, and in 1820 with *Virginus*, due again to the suggestion of his friend Kean. This piece was highly successful on the stage, and won from Hazlitt—an old friend, but otherwise a difficult critic of his contemporaries—a page of curiously perverse eulogy at the close of *The Spirit of the Age*. Three other plays of the same 'heroic' type followed,—*William Tell* (1825), *Alfred the Great* (1831), and *John of Procida* (1840). In the meantime he had struck into the domain of domestic drama. *The Hunchback* (1832) established his position as the most successful of living dramatists. A long series of pieces followed, some comedies, like *The Love Chase* (1837),

*Old Maids* (1841), some rather 'dramas,' in the continental sense, like *The Wife* (1833), *The Daughter*, *The Maid of Mariendorpt*. When about sixty, Knowles attached himself to a somewhat extreme type of Evangelicalism, the pre-occupations of which absorbed his remaining twenty years.

Knowles, like every other writer of serious drama in his days, read the Elizabethans, but what he got from them lies on the surface. A few suggestions of character, a proclivity to daring phrase and violent metaphor, go along with a choice of subject which in his tragedies at least is radically non-Elizabethan. His *Gracchus*, for instance, is Shakespearean only in its frequent verbal reminiscences of *Coriolanus*. Knowles's Irish Liberalism was genuine enough, and its dramatic fruits were necessarily unlike those of the divine-right drama of James. It was doubtless political as much as literary sympathy which captivated Hazlitt's critical judgment, often lightly won on this side. Knowles represents in the drama a mild and somewhat *banale* variety of that poetic Radicalism which adds so much piquancy to Hazlitt's work. His *William Tell*, founded apparently upon Florian, is very far from rivalling Schiller's in poetic beauty, though it expresses similar aspirations. It is less cumbered with rhetoric, but what it has is of lower quality, and the characters are less ideal without being more like life. Knowles complicates the interest in the Elizabethan fashion with a light secondary plot; cuts short the debates and the descriptions; and concludes with a bold but not ineffective violation of tradition, which the German could not have ventured, by making Tell slay Gesler with the 'second arrow.' His domestic dramas, e.g., *The Hunchback* and *The Love Chase*, are lively pictures of manners, with a thin Elizabethan veneer. Knowles's native poetic endowment was slight, and it derived from the strong wine of the old dramatists not a permanent

exaltation, but a fitful fever which permits him to drop abruptly from poetic extravagances only to be justified by high-wrought passion, to the humdrum prose of every day.

The popularity of both Miss Baillie and of Sheridan

Knowles marks how imperfect was the general apprehension of the great poetic drama of the Elizabethans, which both rudely imitated.

Later Essays  
in Romantic  
drama.

Symptoms nevertheless of a quickening of sensibility in this direction became apparent from about 1816. The critical essays of Lamb, the lectures of Coleridge and Hazlitt, began to tell. Coleridge's *Osorio*, the first modern English drama which in any degree caught the witchery of Shakespearean music, had been at length brought upon the stage, as *Remorse* (1813); and his *Zapolya* followed four years later. Shelley's *Cenci* (1819) ran through two editions, and was admired by the theatrical management which declined to perform it. In the third decade of the century, as we shall see in the next chapter, almost every poet of note adventured in dramatic form. The lesser or less known Elizabethans now won the hold upon poetry at large which they had long since acquired upon the solitary enthusiasm of Lamb. Beddoes and Wells are redolent of Webster and Marlowe, Darley and Procter of Fletcher, Sheil of Shirley; while Byron, ostentatiously renouncing the Elizabethan genius, only succeeded in effacing the most individual cachet of his own.

Yet the poetic drama never struck root. Fitfully and grudgingly admitted to the stage, it remained an exotic in literature. While Romanticism everywhere evolved a passion for drama, it failed singularly to elicit dramatic talent. Its poetry was personal and lyrical; Lamb, Coleridge, Shelley, Beddoes, were all in richness and charm of expression compeers of the Elizabethans; but none of them could create character alien to their own, none had—as dra-

matists—humour (for Lamb's fun plays only over his prose, and Beddoes' weird merriment breaks out only in his songs), and none had the mastery of stagecraft which is only to be learnt, where Shakespeare and Ibsen learnt it, on the stage. Hence the poetic drama of the Romantics was altogether secondary and derivative, as their poetry, fiction, criticism were not. Coleridge, so startlingly original in his poetry, adapts Shakespeare and Schiller in his plays; Lamb, whose archaisms only heighten the exquisitely individual flavour of his prose, is but illusively Elizabethan in his blank verse. Shelley alone produced, in *The Cenci*, a genuine and very great drama in a kind quite unborrowed, and shaped to the ideals and passions of his own time. And it was Shelley's first disciple, Beddoes, who, ardent Elizabethan as he was, most emphatically urged the futility of mere revivalism. 'Say what you will,' he wrote, 'I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow—no reviver even however good. These reanimations are vampire cold. Such ghosts as Marlowe, Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets I dare say, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think that we had better beget than revive. . . . Just now the drama is a haunted ruin.'

From this haunted ruin let us turn to the noble finished edifice of Romantic poetry.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE POETS.

ENGLISH poetry in the age of Wordsworth had three characteristic haunts. It thrived in seclusion among the mountain glens of England, in society among her historic Borderlands, and in exile beyond the Alps. Stowey and Grasmere, Tweedside and Ettrick, Venice and Rome, were the scene of poetical activities as alien as the places, and yet all embodying some element of the Romantic revival. At Stowey and Grasmere there grew up a poetry of Nature, and of Man where he most harmonizes or blends with Nature, a poetry mystical, metaphysical, indifferent to history, without the accent of locality, broad and abstract in its treatment of character, excelling in lofty and profound reflection. The Saxon and Celtic Borderlands, on the other hand, were the birthplace, and in part the home, of a poetry altogether without speculative aptitude, but steeped in the atmosphere of tradition, careless of Man and of Nature in the abstract, but reflecting with extraordinary vivacity the rich diversity of individual men and places, abounding in lyrical quality not of the highest order, but incomparable in narrative. In Italy, finally, the poetry of Nature was renewed in a form more cosmopolitan and more sensitive to ideas, rebellious to tradition and indifferent to history, yet drinking deep from the springs of Greek myth and poetry, which the moun-

tain poets had casually tasted, and the Border poets for the most part ignored. The supreme faculty of this later poetry was in *lyric*.

About Wordsworth, Scott, and Shelley, the most complete embodiments of these three *genres*, the other conspicuous poets group themselves. Coleridge stands close to Wordsworth; Moore and Campbell somewhat further from Scott; Byron and Keats and Landor at various distances from Shelley. Chronologically, the first group is slightly earlier than the second, and both are separated by a wide interval from the third, Wordsworth's poetry culminating between 1798 and 1806, Scott's between 1805 and 1810, Shelley's in 1818-22.

#### I.—THE WORDSWORTH GROUP.

William Wordsworth, born April 7th, 1770, at Cocker-  
 mouth, came by both parents of old  
 W. Wordsworth North-country stock. His early years  
 (1770-1850). were passed mainly in the Cocker-  
 mouth home, hard by the blue Derwent, 'fairest of all rivers,'  
 and within sight of Skiddaw. The true seed-time of  
 his genius, however, was his boyhood at the Hawkshead  
 grammar-school. He was no dreamy recluse, but a keen  
 skater, rower, and climber; and his visions came to him  
 in the intoxication of swift movement or violent exercise,  
 as he scoured the ice by moonlight under the tinkling  
 crags, or hung in the 'loud dry wind' on the dizzy ledge  
 over a raven's nest. 'I grew up fostered alike by beauty  
 and by fear.' And even in these early experiences we find  
 the germ of the later feeling that Nature could 'chasten  
 and subdue' as well as exalt. When he appropriates the  
 bird caught by another's springe, 'low breathings' pursue  
 him from among the hills; and when he unlooses another's

boat and rows his 'elfin pinnace' out under the stars, 'a huge peak' strides after him like a living thing. But there were moods of rapture too, when the solid world became an 'unsubstantial faery place' as he lay listening to the first cuckoo. All Nature was full of 'Presences' and 'Visions,' and the 'universal earth' seemed to 'work like a sea with triumph and delight, with hope and fear.' Even in his tenth year, however, this first, or *myth-making*, phase of his Nature-feeling was mingled with a second—the quieter and subtler mood of delight in natural beauty—in silvery smoke-wreaths, in 'bright fields of water' (later on a favourite charm for sleep), in sun and moon; a delight so vivid that it filled the landscape with 'gleams like the flashing of a shield.' Out of these two phases the profounder and more peculiarly Wordsworthian intuition was gradually evolved.

His life at Cambridge (1787-1791) contributed only indirectly to this evolution, and gave little sign of poetic or other promise. He was neither a hard student nor a poetic dreamer, nor even, like Coleridge, Southey, Landor, and Shelley, an intellectual rebel. During the first two summer vacations, however, he gathered the first-fruits of his boyish study of nature in the *Evening Walk*, where his inborn fidelity of touch still struggles in the toils of literary convention. A tour through France and Switzerland in the third vacation (1790) furnished the memories afterwards woven into the *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). After taking his degree he spent some aimless months in London, and then, in November, 1791, yielded to the lure of the great political drama going on in France. From the outset he took the popular side. His whole experience, whether among Cumbrian farmers and shepherds, or in the Cambridge republic of scholars, had made 'Equality' and the inborn nobility of man elementary



axioms of his creed. Intercourse with the French patriots soon fanned these latent instincts into passion; and as he paced the Loire side with the patriot officer Beaupuy, he learned to realize the social iniquities which had made revolution inevitable. A month after the September massacres (1792), he was at Paris, associating intimately with the Girondist leaders. A peremptory summons home, in December, alone prevented him from sharing their fate. Two months later, to his bitter grief, England went to war with the Republic. His inborn faith in man was, for the first time, rudely disturbed. The further development of the Revolution, now its sole stay, did not contribute to restore it. The young Republic triumphed, indeed, but abused its triumph by sending its truest patriots to the scaffold, and turning a war of defence into one of aggression. Deprived of the support of events, Wordsworth began to concern himself with the arguments for his hitherto implicit faith. He was at once arrested by Godwin's *Political Justice*, published a few months before, and for a time gave entire assent to his demonstration of the absolute moral and intellectual sufficiency of the individual. He attended the preaching of Godwin's like-minded friend, Joseph Fawcett, in after days to become a warning example of scepticism as the 'Solitary' of the *Excursion*. With something of Godwin's bitterness he laid sin explicitly to the charge of institutions, and drew in *Guilt and Sorrow* (1793-95) an impressive picture of the philanthropic murderer.

But Wordsworth's own strength did not lie in reasoning, and he was at bottom sensible, as Godwin was not, of its fallacies. The tragic moment of his powerfully written dramatic poem, *The Borderers* (1795-96) lies in a murder committed from generous motives under a misapprehension. And in his own case, argument became

less and less capable of bridging the chasm, not yet annihilated by imagination, between the facts he saw and the faith he craved; and there came a time when, sick with perplexities, he 'yielded up moral questions in despair.' To this 'last and lowest ebb of his soul' corresponded also a literary divagation, unique in his career, to the satirical manner of Pope, in a lampoon, never published, upon the Prince Regent, of which an extract has recently seen the light.

From this 'crisis' he was released by the kindred influences of his sister Dorothy and of the woodland beauty of Dorset. The timely bequest of Raisley Calvert enabled him, in 1795, to enjoy the companionship of both at Racedown. Neither the country nor the country folk were of the strong Cumbrian stamp; but they had a soft and winning grace, one day to be enshrined in the lyrics of William Barnes. And Dorothy's 'exquisite regard for common things' gave a richer tone to all his perceptions, and helped to transform mere observation—'the tyranny of the eye'—into imaginative vision. She 'preserved the poet in him.' He found once more the abiding springs of Nature, and Nature's 'temperate show of objects that endure,' led him gradually to reconquer his old faith in the natural nobility of man, his inborn reverence for the human heart. His work at Racedown, however, still bore the traces of his recent crisis. *The Borderers* and *Guilt and Sorrow* were here completed, and, somewhat later, the pathetic story of the *Ruined Cottage*; finally to appear, enveloped in an alien atmosphere of secure optimism, as the tragic core of *The Excursion*. It was only by degrees that Dorothy's benign and joyous spirit lured him from the 'beauty which hath terror in it' to his more peculiar province of revealing the beauty in simple things:

'She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;  
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;  
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;  
And love, and thought, and joy.'

A second and kindred personal influence was presently added to that of Dorothy. In the autumn of 1795,<sup>1</sup> under unknown circumstances, Wordsworth first met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In May, 1796 they were already intimate. In June, 1797, Coleridge, then settled at Nether Stowey, visited Racedown, recited his own *Osorio*, and listened to the *Borderers* and the story of Margaret, thinking the one 'absolutely wonderful,' the other 'superior to anything in our language which in any way resembles it.' In July the Wordsworths returned his visit, and in August took the neighbouring country house of Alfoxden, chiefly for the sake of his society. For thirteen months the mansion under the Quantock woods, and the thatched cottage in the village street of Stowey, were the focuses of the most memorable poetic friendship of the century; a friendship in which Dorothy must be allowed her equal part. Coleridge's romantic tenderness was exquisitely blent in her with Wordsworth's steadfastness and strength. Without having productive genius, she brought to each poet, in a singularly gracious and winning form, much that he admired in the other, and to one of them what he remembered in himself. Not only Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and Coleridge's *Nightingale*, but the *Lyrical Ballads* throughout are in some degree a monument to her.

The germ of the *Lyrical Ballads* was sown on the day when Coleridge, listening to the *Guilt and Sorrow*, was arrested by Wordsworth's 'original gift of spreading the atmosphere of the ideal world over [familiar] forms and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Athenæum*, December 8th, 1894.

incidents,' and making them as if they were not familiar. In this he recognized a form of imaginative power which was in fact new. Other poets had produced the charm or wonder of poetry by adorning familiar experience, Wordsworth by perfect fidelity to it. The quality by which imagination thus communicates an air of marvel to the familiar became a central topic of discussion at Stowey; the more so because Coleridge himself was peculiarly engaged with the kindred inquiry into the quality by which it equally gives an air of reality to marvel. It was probably Coleridge's critical ingenuity which conceived the design, as described by himself, of 'a series of poems . . . of two sorts; the one of common subjects "such as will be found in every village" poetically treated; the other, of subjects mainly "supernatural," but made real by the dramatic truth of such emotions, supposing them real.' Such was the program carried out, by Coleridge with splendid and successful audacity, by Wordsworth with less complete mastery of a more difficult task, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. It formulated, for the first time, the imaginative apprehension of experience which lay at the heart of Romanticism, and which was equally profound, though extremely diverse, in the two poets. Both classes of poems had their root in the same instinctive sense, that the wonderful and the familiar, the 'supernatural' and the 'natural' are not detached spheres of existence, but the same thing regarded in a different context and atmosphere.

Here the two lines of advance along which poetry had been slowly borne by 'realists' like Cowper and Crabbe, and visionaries like Blake, at length met. Here too the crude marvel-mongering of the Radcliffian school was supplemented by the psychological veracity, without which the marvellous cannot be the basis of great poetry. Horace Walpole contrived 'marvels' by violently distorting Nature;

Mrs. Radcliffe, with more illusive skill in devising them, was careful to explain them away. To Wordsworth and Coleridge the world of familiar undoubted things was itself full of expressive affinities and inexplicable suggestion.

The greater part of Wordsworth's work at Alfoxden was embodied in the *Lyrical Ballads*. His industry was greater than Coleridge's, but his tact less fine, and only two or three of the pieces, such as *We are Seven*, wholly justified the method, though others, like *The Thorn*, in spite of extreme inequality of execution, disclosed at moments a profound sense for the fellowship of natural things,—the watching stars and winds, the healing touch of the unborn babe. The poetic kernel of Wordsworth's part of the volume lay, however, less in the poems designed as *Lyrical Ballads* than in the group, culminating in *Tintern Abbey*, which more directly express the philosophic faith in Nature of which Wordsworth felt himself to be the prophet.

In September, 1798, the little volume was published by the benevolent Cottle at Bristol. Its sale was trifling, but the reviews were less remarkable for the severity of their blame, than for their eccentric distribution of it. *The Idiot Boy* was not altogether disapproved; but the *Tintern Abbey* was entirely ignored, and the *Ancient Mariner* fiercely denounced. In the meantime the Stowey colony had broken up, and on September 16th, the two Wordsworths, with Coleridge, sailed for Germany.

For Coleridge the German tour was a pilgrimage; for the Wordsworths it was simply a change of latitude. In the rich tumult of German voices then audible, there mingled one at least—in Weimar—which had deep affinities with Wordsworth's own. But such affinities, easily as he divined them in Nature, he had little sense for in books; alien ideas, to some extent alien language, put him off, and Goethe repelled him to the last. So he froze at Goslar,

and wandered 'among unknown men,' feeding his imagination upon mementoes of England. These were, however, of a peculiarly happy kind. The visionary light which he had striven to throw about the idiot boy touches delicately the figure of Lucy Gray, and gathers about that other more exquisite 'Lucy,' who dwelt and died near the springs of Dove, and whose memory, it may be, still poignant after nearly twenty years, broke once more through his reserve in the sonnet *Surprised by Joy* (1816). Most of these, with several beautiful additions to the reflective pieces (*The Poet's Epitaph, The Fountain, The Two April Mornings, Matthew*) appeared in the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.

This time of 'home-thoughts from abroad' was soon followed (December, 1799) by the beginning of the long home-life of half a century at Grasmere and Rydal. In October, 1802, he married Mary Hutchinson. *The Recluse* depicts with singular intensity of feeling the home and its harmonious landscape setting, 'a whole, without dependence or defect, . . . perfect contentment, unity entire.' He speaks of his wife and sister in the language used of spiritual presences. The thought of Dorothy was 'an unseen companionship, a fragrance independent of the wind,' and Mary was 'bright with something of angelic light.' Those 'smooth and unbroken paths' which he loved to pace when composing, typified his life henceforth. Byron became a poet when his home was shattered; but Wordsworth only gathered strength from the customary sanctities, which with him, for a few golden years at least, tended, not to philistine routine, but to perpetual new discoveries of wonder and delight.

Here then Wordsworth entered decisively after long preparation upon his task as a poet. That preparation, 'the discipline and consummation of a poet's mind,' is

recorded with epic breadth and dignity in *The Prelude*; the task itself is described in the noble self-dedicatory hymn which alone he published from *The Recluse*. Its execution, though extraordinarily unequal in quality, was remarkably uniform in spirit. Wordsworth has no 'periods,' and there is no modern English poet (unless it be Browning) to whom chronological methods are less fruitfully applied. Journeys, particularly those to Scotland in 1803, 1814, and 1831, on the Continent in 1820 and 1837, supplied fresh motives; the contagion of Scott, or Vergil, faintly coloured his style; the legal and dogmatic elements of his intellect steadily gained dominance; while his poetic vitality slowly declined, with frequent moments of recovery, towards the wise silence of his laureateship (1843-50). Facts and changes such as these almost alone give light and shade to the poetic production which must now be reviewed as a whole.

Two convictions penetrate Wordsworth's work: the dignity of man in himself, and the moral and intellectual strength which comes to him in communion with Nature. The first was the common possession of the revolutionary period, the second he shared with Rousseau. But Wordsworth interpreted both with a subtle profundity entirely his own. Both in Nature and in Man he saw the 'hiding-places of infinite power,' and sometimes the one, sometimes the other, seems to be the focus of his thoughts. Nature was veritably alive, a universal chorus of 'things for ever speaking' which of themselves impress the mind opened to them 'with a wise passiveness.' On the other hand he knew that this marvellous speech was created for him by his own imagination, that it 'must give, else never can receive' (*Prelude*, Bk. XII.). The two points of view have their origin in distinct elements of Wordsworth's intellect, which struggle for mastery in his poetry. The former predominates in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Man is there a domain

which the creative power of Nature flows in upon. At the lowest end of the scale is the Old Cumberland Beggar, in whom the last glimmer of humanity is hallowed by the tranquil decay which blends him with the quiet processes of natural life. In *Expostulation* and *The Tables Turned*, he addresses to the mass of men the familiar appeal to 'watch and receive,' and abandon the disintegrating and distorting activity of thought. Even in *Tintern Abbey*, though there are hints of the mind that 'half creates,' yet the vision into the heart of things is conceived rather as a revelation which finds free access to the soul when all the impeding activities of the senses have been laid asleep. In the later books of the *Prelude* (1805), on the other hand, and in the great *Ode* (1803-6), he is preoccupied with the creative power of imagination. This was a point of view which the influence of Coleridge—and especially of the Kantian Coleridge of 1800—tended to confirm; and the *Prelude*, addressed to Coleridge, and recited to him in January, 1807, is in fact as striking an embodiment of the faith they shared, as the *Lyrical Ballads* are of their divergence. The very phrase quoted above had its precise equivalent in a famous line of the *Dejection*—'in our life alone does Nature live.' The final and most powerful expression of all that he meant by, and hoped from, communion with Nature, was the noble fragment from the *Recluse*. In the 'wedding' of imagination 'with this glorious universe,' however conceived, Wordsworth discerned the secret of all wisdom, happiness, morality and religion. To apprehend the world with the insight of 'love and holy passion,' was to have visions more sublime than Erebus and Elysium, to be released from sensual impulse and vain frivolity; to have 'blessed consolations in distress,' 'cheerfulness for acts of daily life,' and 'peace which passeth understanding.'



This twofold way of regarding Nature had an important influence upon Wordsworth's theories and practice of poetic speech. Hourly communication with Nature hallowed, for him, the peasant and the peasant's language. The 'language actually spoken' by the countryman acquired, like the half animal motions of the beggar, a transforming glamour in his eyes. On the other hand, his own extraordinary gift of imagination, transcending and transforming as it did the experience of common men, continually impelled him to a use of language which transcended and transformed their daily prose. From first to last Wordsworth was liable to mistake the glamour which for him attached to all simple and primitive expressions of feeling, for the transforming spell wrought by his own imaginative energy, and to suppose that he had gathered the harvest of the poet's eye, where he had merely observed with enthusiasm. Hence he was led, involuntarily, to two divergent ideals of style—the one prompted by his instincts as an imaginative poet, the other by his prepossessions as a lover of Nature. In the *Lyrical Ballads* the divergence is obvious enough; and in the famous preface to the second and later editions (1800-2) it appears in awkward efforts at reconciliation, as when (in 1802) he professes to have sought to use 'a selection of the language really used by men,' and this chiefly 'in humble and rustic life,' and 'at the same time to throw over [the incidents described] a certain colouring of imagination.' In the sequel the language of rustic life progressively disappeared from his work, and was only formally retained in his theory. Wordsworth, in fact, with all his extreme advocacy of rustic speech, never appreciated the points at which it really approximates to poetry. From folklore he stood aloof; the rich idiomatic flavour of dialect

even Burns had not taught him to explore; the pathos of Elliot he has, but it is never heightened by the native accent of want. In short, the speech of rustics is for him little more than the negative ideal of a speech purified from all that is artificial and trivial. When he is rustic he is usually bald. His native fountains of expression lay in quite other regions. Nor was he quite true to his genius in the second more unqualified contention of his famous *Preface*, that 'there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of Prose and Verse.' This expresses his purely literary reaction from the 'artificial diction' of Pope's school, without that admixture of the mystic feeling for the peasant which coloured the first. But he was carried away by his revolt against 'personifications' and 'inversions' to ignore in theory all the subtler heightenings of style in which poetry may differ from prose. 'A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:' in such lines and a thousand more he showed, as Arnold has insisted, that great poetry may be written in a manner of noble plainness, with the 'bare sheer penetrating power' of Nature herself, yet be perfectly distinct from prose. Nay more, he has moments of superb revolt—moments in which the russet garb falls from him, and he appears arrayed in all the purple pomp of Romance—as in the close of the *Yew trees*, and of the sonnet to Toussaint l'Ouverture.

The poetry composed with these controlling aims falls into three divisions: the poetry of Nature, the poetry of Man in relation to Nature, the poetry of Man in relation to Men. The first is mainly lyrical, the second includes most of the ballads, the third most of the sonnets.

Hardly any aspect of Cumbrian scenery escaped him, but his peculiar felicity followed two lines of attraction,

corresponding to the two points of view above distinguished. He loved 'common' things, because they were common—and he loved those rare and strange aspects of them, that called forth or 'caught' imagination. Often, of course, the two lines of approach coincided; hence the subtlety and the fluctuation of his feeling for the daisy, now 'the unassuming commonplace of nature,' now capable of giving thoughts too deep for tears; and the celandine, now the 'kindly unassuming spirit,' now invested with a spectral light, as it 'stands forth an offering to the blast,' symbol of the desolate old age of man. Most of the flower poems belong to the early years at Grasmere. He was peculiarly sensitive to the expressiveness of form and space, of solitudes and silences. The sumptuous splendour of colour and perfume which ravished Keats and stimulated Shelley, only impeded his imagination. He had seen the Alps, but save for the great Simplon lines, he left it to Coleridge, who had not, and to Shelley and Byron, to utter them in noble verse. The thunders of the avalanche did not arrest him; but when the winter-day was fading over the frozen lake, he had an ear for the 'alien sound of melancholy' sent into the landscape from the distant hills (*Effect of Natural Objects*). The glow and colour of sunset, again, appealed to Coleridge or to Shelley; Wordsworth feels rather the melting depths of the sky (*Stepping Westward*, 1803), or its blank loneliness ('the wide open eye of the solitary sky,' *Stray Pleasures*, 1806), or its silence (*Brougham Castle*, 1807).

*Animal life* attracts him partly by its analogies with the life of man, partly as an element in the expressiveness of nature. It is easy to distinguish the fine but not very individual work in which he celebrates the devotion of the dog (*Fidelity*, 1805, *Favourite Dog*, 1805), from the lyrics, penetrated with Wordsworthian quality, which so subtly

render the 'austere symphony' of the raven's cry, or the transforming magic of the cuckoo's call. Both aspects are blended in the half human, half mystic treatment of the *White Doe*. The splendour and the ferocity of animal life, as of scenery, are foreign to him. His benign and spiritualized nature equally excludes the fiery pomps of Blake's tiger and the sumptuous guile of Keats' serpent.

As a poet of *childhood*, Wordsworth, as we have seen, owed something to Coleridge—after Blake the first great poet of child-life. Yet his work here is in a kind altogether his own. His children are rarely touched with the exquisite tenderness of Coleridge, but with a kind of solemn joy, passing often into mystic awe. Their beauty 'makes him glad,' but he never rests in that simple mood. He reads mysterious revelations in the child's innocence; its 'fancies' are 'brought from afar,' its 'carols fitted to unutterable thought' (*To H. C.*, 1802); it is the 'father of the man,' the 'Seer,' 'haunted for ever by the eternal mind.' The root of this feeling was Wordsworth's memory of his own childhood, so ordinary in its incidents, so marvellous in its emotions, as described in the *Prelude*. He regarded his mature imagination as faintly following out the traces of these boyish visions, and owing its light to their recovery.

'So feeling comes in aid  
Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
Attends us if but once we have been strong,

he exclaims exultingly, after such an experience, adding the noble lines, already referred to, which contain the pith of his thoughts about childhood :

'O mystery of man, from what a depth  
Proceed thy honours ! I am lost, but see  
In simple childhood something of the base  
On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel,

That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,  
Else never canst receive.'

The child-life is 'the hiding-place of man's power,' where the man must seek it with all his mature faculty.

This thought received, nearly at the same time, a far more magnificent expression in the great *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* (1803-6). The *Ode* resumes the theme of his loftiest previous utterance, the *Tintern Abbey*. In both the poet broods over the contrast between the rapture of his earlier communion with Nature, and the more sober and meditative visions of his maturity. In both, the 'philosophic mind' of mature years is regarded as a compensation for the loss of the earlier ecstasy. But in the *Tintern* the ecstasy is conceived as a state of intoxicated and 'thoughtless' sensation, which the riper mind with its spiritual vision overcomes; in the *Ode* it is an implicit revelation which the riper mind interprets and unfolds. The splendour of youth's vision does indeed die away, but the primary instincts which generate it persist as indestructible elements in all experience—clues by which the soul may 'in a moment' recover in thought the divinely apparelled universe it once beheld. Thus a new and striking meaning was given to the Wordsworthian aphorisms, 'the child is the hiding-place of man's power'—'the father of the man;' and to that impervious self-consciousness which contended in him, as we have seen, with reverence for Nature, and which had made him as a boy 'often unable to think of external things as having external existence,' and compelled him to 'grasp at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism.'

Wordsworth's poetry of childhood is the key to his  
Poetry of Man. poetry of Man. 'The mind of Man' he  
declared to be the main region of his  
song; at Grasmere as at Stowey he did not indeed avert

his ken from, but he showed little insight into, that 'half of human fate' which is remote from the spontaneous freshness of childhood. History attracted him only at isolated points of spiritual illumination; the 'sorrow barricadoed evermore within the walls of cities' excited his sympathy, but not his imagination; if anything in them yielded poetry, it was their moments of self-oblivion (*Stray Pleasures, Power of Music, Star-gazers*), their pining rustics (*Farmer of Tilsbury Vale, 1803, Poor Susan, 1797*), their early morning splendour (*Westminster Bridge, 1802*), their crises of heroism and martyrdom (*Zaragoza, 1809*). But at Grasmere he gave both profounder and more varied expression to his specific vision.

The more trivial group of the Lyrical Ballads had, no doubt, successors (*Alice Fell, 1802; The Blind Highland Boy, 1803*). But they are few in comparison with the poems in which some apparently trivial germ of incident receives a true imaginative illumination. A meeting with an old leech-gatherer (*Resolution and Independence, 1802*), a girl's 'wild' greeting under a glowing sky (*Stepping Westward, 1803*), produced perhaps the most perfectly Wordsworthian of all his poems. The tour to Scotland in 1803 was peculiarly rich in these moments of unobtrusive poetry (*The Maid of Inversnaid, She was a Phantom, The Highland Reaper*). Much reading of the old poets, too, went on in the Grasmere cottage. He translated part of Chaucer's *Troilus*; *Othello* and the *Faery Queene* were 'pre-eminently dear' (*Personal Talk, iii.*). The charm of romance, to which as a reader Wordsworth had always been keenly alive (*Prelude, Book VI.*), began to influence his choice of subject; while the rich literary idiom of the sixteenth and seventeenth century insensibly withdrew him from the charm of bare and homely speech. The *Preface* of 1800 was from 1815 relegated to an Appendix. Bookish

memories began to germinate. He imitated Thomson's fine *Castle of Indolence* in his finer *Stanzas* written in a pocket-copy of it (1802); and the faint sensibility to feudal and chivalrous romance which he evinced in *Hartleap Well* (1800), was quickened in 1805 by Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, with its glowing picture of Melrose Abbey. In *Brougham Castle* (1807) he treated the romantic story of the shepherd lord as a lay, and put it into the mouth of a minstrel. *The Force of Prayer* (1807), and *Egremont Castle* were ballads of the school of Tweedside rather than of Stowey. In the *White Doe* (1807), finally, he told a tale of ancient strife, and laid its scene in the English Melrose.

On all this romantic matter, however, Wordsworth set the unmistakable stamp of his own mind. The feat of the hunter, the adventures of the shepherd lord, are set in an atmosphere of Wordsworthian sentiment. Nature mourned for the hart, and communion with starry sky and lonely hills made the Clifford's adversity an education. And the historic pageantry of *The White Doe*, weak enough certainly, was but the injudiciously chosen setting of a story of mystic consolation, entirely alien from Scott's bustling romance of adventure. Wordsworth's apparent approximations to the school of Scott illustrate, in short, chiefly the absolute gulf which, in spite of warm friendship, divided them as poets. Wordsworth regarded the gulf somewhat too complacently. He expressed the special quality of his own Romance with great felicity in the Fenwick note, and in the fine motto from the *Borderers*, but acknowledged *Marmion* with a patronizing coldness not wholly justified: 'I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end which I should wish you to propose to yourself you will be aware.'

Seven years after the *White Doe*, Wordsworth produced a tale in verse still more remote from the Classical poems. tradition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The grave and noble enthusiasm of Vergil was certainly more congenial to him than Scott's 'light-horseman' dash and glitter; and *Laodamia* (1814), produced after re-reading Vergil with his son, is as Vergilian as consists with its being also Wordsworthian. He embarks, not without effort, upon the poetry of myth which he had once renounced for the more awful Erebus of reality. Yet even here, as in the kindred and not less beautiful *Dion* (1814) and *Lycoris* (1817) which followed, there is no frank self-abandonment to the genius of classic myth. The stubborn core of Wordsworthian thought and sentiment asserts itself everywhere through the veil of half-alien imagery. The story of *Laodamia* was suggested to him by the sympathetic 'interchange of growth and blight' in the trees that grew out of Protesilaus' grave. And the story of *Dion* resumes the mood of the *White Doe* as a picture of one of those 'gracious openings' out of suffering into a region of blessed consolation, which Wordsworth descends into the turmoil of history only to disclose. *Dion's* assassination is his benign release from the perplexities of the crowned idealist.

*Laodamia* and *Dion* fitly introduce the ethical and political division of Wordsworth's poetry. That 'by the soul only the nations shall be great and free' is the conviction which lies at the root of his politics, illustrated in two fine portrayals of the ideal statesman—the Bonaparte sonnet (1802) and *The Happy Warrior* (1805). No poet of the century is more trumpet-tongued when he speaks of liberty. But even in his revolutionary youth liberty had never meant with him a revolt against law.

Poetry of Man  
in relation  
to Men.



It rather implied a lofty and willing fidelity to it, and his *Happy Warrior* not only has 'a sense and faculty for storm and turbulence,' but 'through the heat of conflict keeps the law in calmness made, and sees what he fore-saw.' 'Rapine, avarice, expense,' and tyrannic aggression—materialism and militarism—were thus equally alien to true liberty, and these are the prevailing themes of Wordsworth's political sonnets.

The first dominates the earliest group, composed, in the summer of 1802, under the immediate stimulus of Milton. Miltonic they are in their massive eloquence, in their blending of the ascetic and the heroic temper, in their prophetic vehemence, in their accesses of tenderness. He chides like a lover, and the bitter denunciations of the 'Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour' are followed (September, 1802) within a few days by the lofty apology 'When I have borne in memory what has tamed Great nations,' and the magnificent praise, 'It is not to be thought of that the flood Of British freedom.'

With the alarm of invasion, in October, 1803, the poet ceases to chide, and gives himself up, heart and soul, to the militant patriotism of the hour (*To the Men of Kent, In the Pass of Killicranky*). Wordsworth indeed, with all his hatred for military aggression, set an almost fanatical ethical value on war, and felt a half-bashful joy in its grim romance. He lamented that England had 'changed swords for ledgers,' and confessed that he could not 'read a tale of two brave vessels fighting to the death without feeling more pleasure than a wise man should' (*Recluse*). This purely martial instinct he clearly viewed with compunction, and kept under control; but it infused a more fiery vehemence into his treatment of heroism. Yet his heroic soldiers—Hofer, Schill, Toussaint—fight and perish for their country; and in the last-named sonnet (1802) he

finds for such heroism as this perhaps (in spite of its opening) the loftiest expression in all literature, setting it in the focus as it were of his own wonderfully vital apprehension of the kinship of all the spiritual energies of the world :

‘Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and man’s unconquerable mind.’

At such moments Wordsworth resembles Shelley.

The triumphant closing acts of the great drama found but a tame chronicler in the poet who had been so deeply stirred by its earlier crises, and the noble stream of his war poetry dries up among the arid convolutions of the *Thanksgiving Ode* (1816).

But political and social problems occupied him more and more, and the legal and dogmatic element of his nature became more conspicuous in his treatment of them as his poetic vigour declined. The disposition to ‘touch and handle little truths’ which had marked the temporary obscuration of his imagination, returned upon him in its decay. The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1821) were, on the whole, an unsuccessful attempt to cope with the difficulties of a subject, and of a plan, both of which rather admitted of poetry than yielded it. Neither historical nor geographical sequences lend themselves very happily to the sonnet-cycle; and even the *Duddon Sonnets* of the preceding year (1820)—carrying out an idea conceived by Coleridge at Stowey—are only redeemed by the noble *Afterthought* which closes them. Nor was he happy in the plan of the great philosophic poem which more than any other gathers up all the elements of his political and social thought. *The Excursion* (1814) was designed as the second part of a still vaster work, *The Recluse*, of which one other fragment—the ‘First book’ (printed 1888)—was alone composed. It is made

ap nominally of four conversations, carried on by a series of faintly modulated replicas of the poet himself. The introduction (Book I.) with its fine reminiscences of his early discipline to the faith in Nature (inferior, however, to the corresponding passages of *The Prelude*), leads to the story of the *Ruined Cottage*, now first made public, and to the three books of stately eloquence in which the Wanderer urges upon the solitary sceptic of Blea Tarn the Wordsworthian 'correction of despondency,' by the culture of imagination and love in the presence of Nature. In the third part (Books V., VI.), the Pastor 'gives for these abstractions solid facts' by portrayals, less finished and pathetic than that of Margaret, of the Cumbrian dale-folk among whose graves they stand. Finally, the Wanderer unfolds (Books VIII.-IX.) Wordsworth's criticism of modern institutions. Here flourish many of the most famous prose-patches of *The Excursion*; but, in spite of some narrowness, this Wordsworthian essay in sociology is a weighty and memorable utterance. It is dominated by an equal zeal for freedom and for discipline—freedom from the social impediments to moral growth, and discipline in morality,—overthrow of industrial slavery, therefore, and establishment of national education. Along both lines of reform, latter-day England in principle agrees with the Tory poet. Wordsworth himself introduced *The Excursion* to the public with an authoritative intimation of the supreme position he claimed for it among his works. It was to be the 'body of a Gothic church,' with the *Prelude* as antechapel, and the 'minor pieces' as the 'little cells, oratories and sepulchral recesses.' Posterity has chosen, not unreasonably, to worship rather in the cells, or even in the antechapel. *The Excursion* certainly stands in the highest rank of that unpoetic genre, the didactic poem. But its many magnificent passages usually resume previous

utterances of a rarer and more inimitable quality, while its novelties in thought are commonly inferior in expression.

Wordsworth's fame has never undergone any real relapse. But it has been appreciated from widely different points of view. Leaving out of account the merely doctrinaire Wordsworthians of whom Matthew Arnold made unkind fun, this appreciation has proceeded from three points of view. From the first, Wordsworth is regarded as the poet of a peculiar mystic idealism, who disclosed, in the rapt communion with nature, an undreamed of access to the 'life of things.' This point of view predominates in Mr. F. W. Myers' subtle and powerful study, and to some extent in the luminous essay of the Master of Balliol. To a second and larger class, represented by Arnold, Wordsworth's supreme interest lies not in his mystic suggestiveness, but in his subtle fidelity, the 'bare sheer penetrating power' of his descriptions of Nature. But during the last twenty years a third point of view has found increasing response. The new Romantic movement differs from the old in its completer detachment from the actual. It somewhat too exclusively values those elements in poetry which are least allied to realism—the imagination that dreams of the dreams of old time, the verse that sings with its own music. So regarded, Wordsworth's memorable work certainly shrinks to a narrower compass. But, within that compass, both Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Watts have given it unmeasured praise. The solemn imagery of *Yew Trees*, or of the *Toussaint L'Ouverture* sonnet, the dreamy suggestion in the *Highland Reaper* :

‘ Of old unhappy far-off things,  
And battles long ago,’

lines instinct with the spirit of Romance, stand out for them like isolated points of fire.

But while the Romantic criticism has not damaged Wordsworth, it has certainly thrown new lustre about his great brother poet, to whom dream and melody were not momentary accesses, but the elementary habit and virtue of his mind. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born at Ottery St. Mary's, October 21st, 1772, was the youngest child of the vicar and schoolmaster of the place, a man of curious learning and abstracted habits. The woodland beauty of Devon had less share in moulding his precocious boyhood than the fairy tales he pored over, and the starry universe which his father taught him to watch and name. 'I heard him,' Coleridge tells us, 'with a profound delight . . . but without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age.' His long school-life at Christ's Hospital (1782-91) powerfully fostered this characteristic. 'Debarred from Nature's living images' (save for gazing on the moving clouds from the leads), he fed with eager curiosity on all speculation about Nature, indulged a 'rage for metaphysics,' 'sporting infidel' with Voltaire, and hung entranced over the revealing knife of the surgeon.

In October, 1789, these chaotic impulses received a more definite direction. He fell in with the *Sonnets* of Bowles, and the passion for natural beauty that slumbered in him was strong enough to be evoked by that mild stimulus. Bowles, in his generous phrase, made him a poet. But the poet in him did not at once become supreme. His phenomenal wealth of ideas and his equally phenomenal weakness of will, embarrassed and distracted his subtle and delicate poetry. Politics, metaphysics, theology, by turns absorbed him, and each contributed a vital element to his poetry, but also something alien and incongruous. The

history of that of his early manhood is that of the gradual subjection of these partially alien domains by the 'shaping spirit' of his imagination,—a subjection which for a brief season became complete, in the golden days of Stowey.

The least easily assimilable was the first. At Cambridge (1791-94) he threw himself impetuously into the cause of freedom, 'sang his lofty gratulation unawed amid a slavish band,' his eloquence and personal fascination winning him prestige and apparently indulgence. In June, 1794, he first met Southey at Oxford, and roused that buoyant yet cautious spirit to enthusiastic acceptance of his scheme of 'Pantisocracy.' Two months later he composed with Southey, and with Southey's friend Lovel, a crude tragedy, *The Fall of Robespierre*, on the pantisocratic principle of one act apiece. His work as a poetic apostle of Fraternity culminated in the lines which extend it, half jocosely, to the 'Young Ass' (December, 1794); in the various sets of verses addressed, with the compassionate sympathy it inspired, 'to an unfortunate woman'; and in the series of political sonnets, loose in structure and rhetorical in style, which extol Priestley and Godwin, denounce Pitt, and patronise Burke, and were published, with effusive editorial compliments, in the *Liberal Morning Chronicle* (December-January, 1794-95).

Coleridge's worship of Liberty was from the first far more a passion of the speculative than of the practical intellect, and his metaphysical studies at Cambridge only carried its roots deeper. He immersed himself in the sublime imaginings of Plotinus, and found in the doctrine of monads a fascinating solution of the problem which eternally haunts minds of his type, how to interpret matter in terms of mind. The universe was 'ebullient with creative deity,' pervaded by 'an organizing surge' of vital energies which emanate directly from God. 'Some nurse the

infant diamond in the mine, Some roll the genial juices through the oak.' It is easy to understand how a mind which had once rested in this conception, should have been attracted to the other thinkers whom, simultaneously or later, Coleridge owned as his masters; to Hartley, 'wisest of men,' who 'traced the ideal tribes Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain;' to Berkeley, who by a less cumbrous device than the monads brought life into direct relation with God; to Kant and Schelling.

Abstract speculation was not yet, however, as in his later prose, divorced from delicate and subtle sensation; his spiritualized Nature teems with colour and melody and perfume; and his early poetry contains several pieces from which all direct political and metaphysical content falls away. The *Song of the Pixies* (1793), *The Lines on an Autumnal Evening* (recited at a Cambridge literary society in default of a promised essay), and *Lewti* (1794), are pervaded by this fine sensuousness in which no other English poet quite resembles Coleridge. His touch has at once the voluptuous quality of Keats, and the mystic quality of Shelley. He paints the russet-suited landscape of eighteenth-century idyllists from the rich and varied palette which we are accustomed to call Celtic. The clouds are of amber and purple. The fragrance of furze and of bean-flower haunts the page. Yet while all things retain their full value as sensation, they are invested with dreamy semblances of things beyond sensation; they are not solid and opaque, but full of half-lights and elusive suggestions. The dainty folklore of the pixies blends easily with this mystic atmosphere, and, what is of more significance, they are drawn with a delicate feeling for the affinities of Nature and myth which announces the poet of *Christabel*; as when the pixies, who sip the fragrant dew of the furze, are said to be clad in robes of rainbow like the dew itself.

All these various strivings finally meet and mingle in the *magnum opus* of Coleridge's exuberant early manhood, the *Religious Musings* (1794-96). The monad theory is unfolded in grandiose phrase. The Revolution receives its metaphysical *quasi*-justification as the triumph of 'infinite Love,' which 'diffused through all makes all one whole' over oppression; to know which 'fraternizes man and constitutes our charities and bearings.' And though the manner swells too loftily, partly under the infection of Schiller's *Robbers*, and the style bristles with daring neologisms, marks of the literary rebel, yet the poetic material chaotically strewn on the page is very rich, and here and there the storm and stress cease, and the senses are suddenly steeped in visions of romantic loveliness, as in the lines upon the open gates of Paradise.

The autumn of 1795 brought with it, in close conjunction, the most fortunate event of Coleridge's life, and perhaps its greatest disaster. On October 4th, he married Sarah Fricker at Bristol, shortly before or after he first met Wordsworth. His marriage practically closed the dream of pantisocracy, which it was designed to promote; and for a few weeks, chiefly spent at Clevedon, on the adjacent coast, storm and stress were resolved into idyll. 'Ere Peace with Sara came,' he had loved to watch the tempest-shattered bark by the lightning's blaze, and at the next flash 'to see no vessel there' (*Shurton Bars*, September, 1795). Now, he sat at the door of his jasmined cot, steeped in a 'soft floating witchery' of sound and scent, and almost persuaded to resign the glittering bubbles of vain philosophy before the beloved woman's mild reproof (*Eolian Harp*). But this mood could not last. In the city hard by, the poet's 'unnumbered brethren toiled and bled' (*Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement*); there, moreover, was an excellent library. The year 1796



was, however, given over mainly to abortive projects ; in the spring *The Watchman* ran its brief career ; in the summer he confesses that he ' composes very little, and absolutely hates composition.' Yet the ingredients of that atmosphere of romance in which the Stowey poetry was presently to take shape were gathering in his mind during these fallow months. His old neo-Platonist passion was still keen, but he was more absorbed in two new studies—chemistry and folk-lore. He hung over the experiments of Davy and explored the folios of Jacob Boehme, found the zest of the marvellous in the transmutations of matter, and symbolic truth in superstitious fancy (*Destiny of Nations*).

Such was Coleridge's preparation for the eighteen months' harvest time at Stowey. There, on the last day of 1796, he settled with wife and infant, attended by his young disciple, Charles Lloyd. Other friends were frequent guests ; Charles and Mary Lamb (*This Lime-tree Bower*), citizen Thelwall, publisher Cottle, and the young William Hazlitt. With Southey his intimate relations were for the present over ; but Southey's place was more than taken by Wordsworth, from August, 1797, as we have seen, his neighbour at Alfoxden. Coleridge's poetry at Stowey is not, like Wordsworth's, substantially embodied in the *Lyrical Ballads*. While Wordsworth's copious industry was steadily carrying out the scheme, Coleridge wandered with desultory step through a more varied poetic domain, and finally contributed only one considerable piece to the joint volume. The European conflict, absolutely ignored in Wordsworth's poetry before 1799, evoked from Coleridge, besides fainter notes of anger or foreboding, the two great odes, *To the Departing Year* (written on the eve of his settlement at Stowey), and *France* (February, 1798). The grief of disillusion, which Wordsworth afterwards narrated in lofty retrospect in the *Prelude*, here breaks out in lyric

passion and tumultuous harmony of cadences. Coleridge was clearly mindful of Collins' noble ode on Liberty; but where Collins celebrates an academic abstraction, Coleridge utters his poignant anguish for a desecrated but still adored mistress.

A second group of poems, *This Lime-tree Bower, June, 1797*; *Frost at Midnight, February, 1798*; *Fears in Solitude, April, 1798*) renders the Stowey scenery with a touch as tender and more dreamlike, subtle and atmospheric than we find in the Clevedon idylls. This dreamlike quality becomes the very stuff of the poetry in the wonderful fragment of *Kubla Khan*, the record of an opium dream (1797-1798).<sup>1</sup> The close shows signs of incoherence, but the first part is a superb piece of Turneresque imagination,—reminiscences from the most various sources—oriental romance, Bürger's *Lenore* and the 'roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,' fused into a very real piece of unreality. Here, too, Coleridge showed his unique faculty of finding visionary music for his visionary speech. The resonant quatrains are built upon those of the *France*, but with an indefinable witchery infused into them. Both qualities reappear, sustained, if not heightened, in *The Ancient Mariner* (November, 1797). This famous poem was probably anterior to the formulation of the 'two classes' of Lyrical Ballad, to be composed by each independently; for they planned it together, and attempted to share the execution, only to find that 'their styles would not assimilate,' a discovery which the scheme of the Ballads presupposes. Its materials were thus somewhat composite: eerie tales of the South Sea, old voyages, saints' legends, a dream of a skeleton ship, and the modern sentiment of animal sanctity. This bold use of

<sup>1</sup> Some doubt is thrown upon Coleridge's own date, 1797, by Mr Campbell (Introd. to Works, p. xlii.).

marvel, without even the decent pretext of allegory or personification, exasperated the critics, and did not please even the one man who gave the poem lofty and adequate praise. 'I dislike all the miraculous part in it,' wrote Lamb, 'but the feelings of a man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's magic whistle.' The marvels are, however not mere anomalies protruded (like the mysterious legs in *The Castle of Otranto*) into the normal world, but elements in a magical world of their own, fantastic as a dream, and yet consistent as reality. Scenery, atmosphere, even the colouring of phrase and rhythm, concur in giving to this magical world the harmonious unity of a possible experience. But the chief instrument is, as Lamb saw, the wonderful painting of the 'passion' of the mariner himself. Wordsworth, who seems to have conceived him on the lines of his own humane murderer in *Guilt and Sorrow*, enumerated among the 'grave defects' of the poem that the mariner had no character. Nor has he; he is only a soul that has been 'alone on a wide wide sea,' and remains but an embodied memory of what he has undergone. The pilot's boy goes crazy at the sight of him, he 'passes like night from land to land,' compelled by an inward agony to tell his tale. He has, as Lamb said, 'a supernatural cast,' that ghostly air which comes to men transported beyond the normal bounds of human faculty by an overwhelming experience. And all this weird and penetrating supernaturalism is thrown into relief with exquisite instinct by scenes full of the babbling innocence of Nature. The subtle psychologist and the voluptuous painter of the Stowey woodlands are here confronted. At only one point does Coleridge's tender delight in the natural world seem—as he afterwards thought—to have introduced an incongruous element into his presentment of marvel. The shooting of the albatross—Wordsworth's

suggestion—was in admirable keeping so long as the persecution it provoked was conceived as vengeance for the violation of the bird's legendary sanctity. But in an unfortunate (though beautiful) stanza at the close it was suggested that the ruthless supernatural destroyers of men had really been avenging a breach of the law of kindness to all living things, a suggestion which, in some degree, divides the poem, as it were, against itself, and lets in the light of common day upon its spectral scenery.

From such touches of incongruity *Christabel* (1797-1800) is wholly free. Entirely his own work, it more nearly realizes, even in its fragmentary state, Coleridge's conception of the supernatural ballad. The 'miracles,' the somewhat gross and material horrors, are absent. The element of marvel is not obtruded, but slowly distilled into the air. The first part is a masterpiece in the art of suggesting enchantment by purely natural means. The castle, the wood, the mastiff, the tree with its jagged shadows, are drawn with a quivering intensity of touch which conveys the very atmosphere of foreboding and suspense. The real marvel, too, when we come to it—the serpent-nature of Geraldine—is of a more searching and subtle weirdness than those of *The Mariner*; for no prodigies of the external world touch the imagination so nearly as distortions of human personality. But what was most individual in *Christabel* was, after all, the verse. Here, as in the *Mariner*, Coleridge shaped his fairy vessel out of worn and weather-beaten timbers. The anapæstic metre of four beats was indeed less hackneyed than the ballad stanza; but it had conveyed generations of uncouth writing before its beauty was discovered by Spenser; and eighteenth-century tradition had made it (as in Goldsmith's *Retaliation*) predominantly jocular or satirical. Only Chatterton and Blake had at moments anticipated

the melodies he elicited from it, and neither approached his range. Nor did any contemporary really catch the subtle music of *Christabel*, though both Byron and Scott essayed it.

The only other considerable contribution of Coleridge to the *Lyrical Ballads* — *Love* (1798-99, published 1800), with the *Ballad of the Dark Ladye*, which it was intended to introduce—is of less rare quality, and was far better liked by its early readers. It stands in somewhat the same relation to all previous ballads of love and chivalry as the *Mariner* does to all previous ‘Tales of Wonder.’ In both cases Coleridge’s originality lies in the delicate and subtle psychology. As the sea horrors were portrayed through the mind of the *Mariner*, so here we follow the romantic story of the Knight and the Lady of the Land through the medium of the changing emotions which it excites in the guileless Genevieve.

Before the *Lyrical Ballads* were published (September, 1798) the little Stowey colony had, as we have seen, broken up; and on September 16th Coleridge, with the two Wordsworths, sailed for Hamburg. The journey, for them an episode, opened a new epoch in his life, the record of which has been already given. In Germany he found a final satisfaction for the intellectual needs which had impelled him from system to system throughout his eager youth. His whole remaining career was in effect, as Pater says, an attempt to work out, under that influence, all that was involved in the distinction of Imagination and Fancy. Unhappily, imagination itself flagged as the analytic process became more involved. Germany, which taught him so much about the nature of poetry, taught him little as a poet, and in sheer poetic quality had little to teach him. He imitated, and sometimes improved, various pieces of Stolberg, Matthisson, Schiller. His powerful version of

*Wallenstein* occupied much of the winter of 1799-1801. The 'old romantic charm' and woodland beauty of the Brocken elicited characteristic lines; but these, as well as the playful hexameters sent to the Wordsworths at Goslar, are penetrated by a new note of wistfulness. After his return the sense of want grew only more dominant in his verse; and the ode *Dejection* (April, 1802) was an infinitely pathetic qualification of the Wordsworthian faith in the power of Nature to impress and restore. 'Ah, William' (he wrote in the earliest version), 'we receive but what we give, And in our life alone does Nature live.' The glorious 'wedding vesture' which earth had worn awhile to him became more and more obviously the gift of his rare moods, as opium deepened and darkened the intervening gloom. His poetic career may be said to have ended with the resolution to begin it anew, called forth by Wordsworth's recitation of the *Prelude* (January, 1807). The brief snatches of verse which relieve at intervals the latter half of his life are touched with an indefinable autumn mellowness. Among the choicest of them are little allegories of the spiritual life. He sings exquisitely of Love and Hope (*Love's First Hope, The Visionary Hope, Work without Hope, To Two Sisters, Love, Hope and Patience in Education*), but rather as treasured memories than as secure possessions; of Pain and Pleasure (*The Two Founts*, 1826); of 'Time real and imaginary.' *Alice du Clos* is a new lyrical ballad of great beauty. In melodious grace there was to the last no decay.

The two great poets whose work has now been reviewed were at once profoundly akin and strikingly different, and both their points of kinship and their points of divergence go to the heart of English Romanticism. It is therefore necessary to define these with some care. On a first glance the two

Wordsworth  
and Coleridge.

men seem, physically and psychologically, of wholly different make. Wordsworth, a rugged North-countryman, somewhat ascetic and austere, constant in all relations, with a rigid framework of character behind which intellectual passion 'burnt like an unconsuming fire of light;' Coleridge, a Devonian, of softer, but more richly sensitive, fibre, every vibration of which stirred or shattered purpose, or started imagination on some new evolution of phantasmal shapes and sounds. Hazlitt admirably noted their different habits of composition. Coleridge 'liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood' where the physical obstacle incessantly deflected the current of thought; while Wordsworth 'always wrote walking up and down a straight gravel path.' These traits of the workshop illustrate several differences in their work. Coleridge loved broken surfaces, picturesque interruptions,—may-thorn amid yew, purple islands amid bright sea: Wordsworth painted with a broader touch, treating detail with even prosaic fidelity, but rarely lingering over its bright play. And Coleridge was, as we have seen, peculiarly fascinated by the 'interruptions' of the spiritual world, the straggling branches of marvel which startle and way-lay the observer. Wordsworth, on the other hand, found the marvels in the familiar and normal, and only there, and could not be persuaded to concern himself with the fairy-lore of Stowey.

These diversities sufficiently imply the affinities which underlay them. Both surpassed all other poets of their generation, both in delicacy of sense-perception and in that kind of imaginative power which acts not by arbitrary recombinations of the facts of sense, but by a peculiar subtle scrutiny of them. For both, the universe was alive and mysteriously divine. But they differed alike in the direc-

tion of their sensibility, in the regions of experience to which their imagination attached itself, and in the character of that imagination itself. To the beauty of landscape they were equally sensitive; Coleridge with a more delicate voluptuousness, Wordsworth with more penetrating veracity. In painting strange mystic effects upon mountains or water they become at moments almost indistinguishable. But human nature attracted them at widely different points. Both indeed were 'made glad' by the beauty of children, and had an equal share in the poetry of childhood. Neither again was in any special sense a poet of love—love that was 'denied' to the one who was 'made for it,'<sup>1</sup> and so serenely and securely given to the other. But simple human nature, 'the common growth of Mother Earth,' consecrated by 'her humblest mirth and tears,' and devoid of any charm of virtue or wit, appealed only to Wordsworth; while Coleridge was allured to rarer and remoter tracts of humanity, lurking places of strange dreams and fantastic anomalies of belief. 'Facts of the mind' were for Wordsworth the elementary passions; for Coleridge, as we have seen, they meant those curiosities of superstition which Wordsworth disdained. Horace Walpole and others had amused themselves by loose agglomerations of these curiosities. It was not by outbidding his predecessors in invention of wonders, but by the extraordinary delicacy with which he painted the passions they excite, that the 'subtle-souled psychologist' made an epoch in the poetry of the supernatural. And, finally, they differed in character of imagination. Wordsworth was more penetrating, Coleridge more dreamlike. Wordsworth transfigured the little domain he lived in, but hardly or rarely found poetry where he had not set his eye; Coleridge,

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's own words.



feeding with yet more ravishment upon his sensations, had also the mystic's impatience and disbelief of them, and with all his exquisite power of poetic realism, was yet more himself when he abandoned himself to dreams like *Kubla Khan*, in which all the elements of experience are flung up, 'like chaffy grain beneath the mower's flail,' under the sole yet absolute control of an imperial instinct for beauty.

These diversities would, however, have been more palpable had the two poets never met. Each has impressively recorded his gratitude to the other.

Mutual influence. Wordsworth, as we have seen, owed to Coleridge something both of human tenderness and of speculative and critical thought (*Prelude*, Book XIV.). Coleridge, though even more fervid, is less explicit. 'William, my teacher and friend,' 'William, my head and my heart,'—his verse epistles to the brother and sister at Goslar (1798-99) abound with affectionate outbursts like these. What Wordsworth had 'taught' him was, we cannot doubt, in the first place, a more strong and confident acceptance of the faith in the joyousness and joy-evoking power of Nature which was part of the being of William and Dorothy. It is in his Stowey poems that it first distinctly emerges. It is now that he indignantly rebukes the conventional 'melancholy' of the nightingale of literature—'in Nature there is nothing melancholy' (*Nightingale*); now that he promises his sleeping babe an up-bringing 'by lakes' and 'ancient mountains' (*Frost at Midnight*), as Shelley vowed for his, Italy and Greece; now that he seems to owe all his own intellectual life to those 'lakes and mountain-hills and quiet dales' of England, among which so very few of his days had been passed (*Fears in Solitude*). After the return from Germany it gives way, and the *Dejection* sadly puts by the belief that joy has any other source than the soul itself.

Further, Coleridge's subtler supernaturalism itself, alien as it was from Wordsworth, yet owed much to him. If we compare the supernaturalism of the monads, even of the pixies, with that of *Christabel* or the *Ancient Mariner*, we shall feel little hesitation in connecting the change with the impression confessedly made upon Coleridge by Wordsworth's 'unique faculty' of idealizing familiar things. To give the world of marvel the convincing power of the familiar, was but to translate that Wordsworthian formula as it were into Coleridgean terms.

Both poets were thus, as Wordsworth said, 'prophets of Nature,' though Coleridge's prophecy was far less continuous, many-sided, and serene; and both were Romantic poets, though Wordsworth's Romance, elicited as it was from the immediate neighbourhood of prose, and little controlled by self-criticism, was liable in its loftiest moments, to relapse. Both are the great English masters, as Goethe, who unites and transcends their spheres, is the great European master, of poetic realism; both possess, though not with equal security, the region in which Romance and Nature meet, though Coleridge reaches it by 'the ladder of the impossible,'<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth by the steeper and more treacherous ladder of the commonplace.

Neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge had, strictly speaking, either a master or a disciple. But the impulses which they expressed with so original an accent were themselves widely diffused, and animated much other verse of true, though inferior distinction. The one poet who had a decisive influence upon either, may here be briefly dismissed, for though he long survived the close of our period, all his significant work was done almost as long before it began.

<sup>1</sup> I borrow this phrase from a felicitous page of Mr. Year's *Celtic Twilight*.

The *Fourteen Sonnets, written chiefly on Picturesque Spots during a Journey* (1789), by William Lisle Bowles, will always be memorable as having fascinated both poets, and given a more than passing stimulus to Coleridge. The simplicity and tenderness he found in them they really possess; but not in a degree which, after *The Task*, indicated much original power. Nor had Bowles in fact anything more of moment to say. A country clergyman of leisure and means, he continued at long intervals to lift up his little light in the midst of the glory he had helped to kindle, sang sympathetically of the battle of the Nile, and the sorrows of Switzerland, and showed how little he comprehended the poetic revolution by galvanizing the defunct didactic poem into such semblance of vitality as belongs to his *Spirit of Discovery by Sea* (1804). In 1806 he embodied the extreme anti-Augustan reaction in an edition of Pope, which involved him, thirteen years later, in a violent controversy with Byron. This was the most stirring incident in the placid fourscore years of the vicar of Bremhill.

If Bowles followed Wordsworth in decrying Pope, the far more remarkable man who has been dubbed 'Pope in worsted stockings,' mediated between them. Born at Aldeborough, on the Suffolk coast, George Crabbe passed his youth and early manhood in a struggle for existence amid unlovely conditions, from which he learned to elicit a stern and sombre poetry. His art was, happily, already mature when the generous kindness of Burke procured him a publisher and a chaplaincy. *The Library* (1781) and *The Village* (1783) at once won attention. But prosperity removed a stimulus, and after the publication of *The Newspaper* (1785) his career appeared to have closed. Twenty-two years later, however, the aging country

W. L. Bowles  
(1762-1850).

G. Crabbe  
(1754-1832).

clergyman awoke, and, in the heyday of Scott's glory, instantly recovered his position with *The Parish Register* (1807) and *The Borough* (1810), followed by the not less popular *Tales in Verse* in the year of *Childe Harold* (1812), and the *Tales of the Hall* in the year of *Don Juan* (1819); and Byron had long been dead, and Scott was within a few months of death, when the veteran whom both delighted to honour passed away. Crabbe's long career reflects more clearly than any other the progress of what has been called the 'epic revival.' His early pieces are moral and descriptive, with illustrative sketches of character; in the later, the story element becomes steadily more obtrusive, and has more influence on the construction. He came forward at the outset to expose the literary sentimentality which discovered Auburns and Edens in every country village. His own was squalid and poverty-stricken, and in a conspicuously dreary situation, and he painted it with stern veracity. He dwells with an air of 'surly virtue' upon things that repel, as if to make them the more repellent. He paints the weed and the workhouse, the dull landscape, which civilization has neither enriched nor let alone, with every rank and gross detail remorselessly emphasized. But beneath this scorn of the cleric and the moralist for his subject there lay, as in every great realist, the artist's implicit sense of the richness of common things. He has no raptures and no philosophy about Nature; he regards the Revolution with unqualified horror, and his noble patrons with a too unctuous veneration; but his eye and his imagination are perpetually occupied with following out the drama of homely life. His style, though mechanical and loose, and thrown into the mould of often shambling heroic couplets, is charged with the fine observation which makes mean things interesting, and which led Jane Austen, we are told.

playfully to fancy herself as 'Mrs. Crabbe.' Jeffrey contrasted him with Wordsworth as having drawn things 'as they are,' and not as they appeared through a refracting mental atmosphere of his own. The criticism is Augustan, and Professor Courthope significantly repeats it. Wordsworth's vision into the 'life of things,' within his own province, was without doubt immeasurably more penetrating than Crabbe's; but it included a naked veracity and precision equal to his in portraying their outer detail. Hence he was one of the few contemporaries whom Wordsworth keenly relished. And in narrative power and sympathetic understanding of men he is akin, not to Wordsworth at all, but to the great romancer of Abbotsford, whose death-bed, like that of Fox, he helped to solace.

Akin to Crabbe in the character of his talent, though slighter and narrower, was the author of R. Bloomfield (1766-1823). *The Farmer's Boy* (1798). Robert Bloomfield passed his childhood on a Suffolk farm, his youth in the garret of a London shoemaker, where he got a rude education by reading the parliamentary debates to his fellow-workmen—like his own Giles, 'a Gibeonite that served them all by turns.' He was still a boy when *The Seasons* fell in his way. Under this stimulating influence his own store of rural reminiscence began to germinate. *The Farmer's Boy* is a kind of bucolic *Seasons*; sowing and reaping, lambing and shearing, are handled with a bright descriptive touch, which has moments of picturesque concentration. Like Crabbe he uses the heroic couplet, and mingles homely colloquialisms with relics of Augustan phrase and manner. But he is as joyous as Crabbe is sombre. He published, subsequently, a variety of pieces—lyrical, narrative, dramatic—on rural life, *Rural Tales* (1810) *Haslewood Hall*, and *Mayday with the Muses* (1823).

Like Bloomfield, John Clare owes his repute largely to his 'uneducated' quality. The son of a pauper peasant, he grew up, as a ploughboy, in the unexciting East Anglian country near Peterborough. It was again Thomson that first stirred his nascent faculties, enforced later by the powerful aid of Wordsworth. After many difficulties his *Poems descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* were published in 1820 by the kindly and enlightened firm of Taylor and Hessey, and immediately aroused interest. Wealthy patrons vied in improving the circumstances of the 'peasant poet,' who appeared with a second volume the next year, *The Village Minstrel*. But his career was soon blighted by imprudent speculation, and ended in an asylum. Clare had a keen eye and a bright and tender descriptive touch; but his imaginative and intellectual qualities are slight, and where he passes beyond description he becomes insignificant.

A far larger measure of poetry than either Bloomfield or Clare possessed belonged to the third of the 'uneducated poets,' Ebenezer Elliott. His whole life was passed in or near Sheffield, a region peculiarly rich in those sudden juxtapositions of the grime and clatter of industry with the wild beauty of glen and moorland, which his verse reflects. Nature touched him first, and in the year of the *Lyrical Ballads* he produced *The Vernal Walk*, a descriptive poem, the very title of which suggests, what the contents confirm, that he was still under the spell of Thomson. Twenty silent years followed; Elliott toiled with the toilers, prospered, and set up a foundry of his own. Then he began once more to write. It was a narrow but intense experience which he now poured forth in a rapid succession of poems: *Love* (1823), *The Ranter* (1827), *Corn-law Rhymes* (1828), *The Village Patriarch* (1829). The horrors of the factories,

J. Clare  
(1793-1864).

E. Elliott  
(1781-1849).

exposed by inspectors and commissions, found for the first time their poet. The strong music of old battle songs was set to words thrilling with the eternal tragedy of hunger. Much of the phraseology is crude enough; shrill rhetoric about tyrants and slaves often mars the effect of the strong and simple pathos; but in concentration and lyric fire they rarely fail. The famous battle song,

‘Day, like our souls, is fiercely dark,  
What then, ’tis Day!’

has something of the fierce tramping movement of Hugo’s *Chasseur*. The Corn-law Rhymer is now perhaps best remembered by his *Corn-law Rhymes*; yet his narrative poems deserve not to be forgotten. He can draw a portrait or tell a tale (e.g., that of the grandfather in *Village Patriarch*, Book V.) with all the incisive vigour of Crabbe; he broods over the detail of natural beauty in pieces like *The Wonders of the Lane* or *The Bramble*, with a subtle precision of touch which recalls Wordsworth and is yet quite individual; he feels the romantic charm of names and places as intensely as Scott, and makes his little Hallamshire rivers—‘Locksley that raves of broil and battle,’ ‘Rivilin the clear and cold,’ ‘Sheaf that mourns in Eden’—as living as Tweed or Doon themselves. Elliott is, it is true, compared with these three, altogether wanting in artistic self control; he has large tracts of crude, chaotic, volcanic matter, harsh and tortuous in expression. Yet he was a genuine and remarkable poet; and more than any other of our period he may claim to have carried out that part of Wordsworth’s poetic program from which Wordsworth himself ‘averted his ken,’ and given voice to

‘the fierce confederate storm  
Of sorrow barricaded evermore  
Within the walls of cities.’

## II.—THE SCOTT GROUP.

While Wordsworth and Coleridge were still contending with the vituperation or faint praise of the reviews, a succession of new poetic voices had received a loud and instant welcome. 'Sir Walter reigned before me, Moore and Campbell before and after,' wrote Byron; and the three men 'reigned' by virtue largely of common merits and common defects. They appealed to the interest in adventure, to the sense for picturesque description and obvious, ringing melody, to the taste for a flavour, not too subtle or too pronounced, of the bygone in the made dishes of literature. Imagination, in Wordsworth's sense, they neither possessed nor demanded of their readers. If they gave charm to familiar facts, it was not by steeping them in mystic suggestion, but by setting them in the light of historical or legendary antecedents. With Scott Romanticism turned upon and began to comprehend the past. Tradition and legend, which Coleridge culled and beautifully interwove in unearthly dreams, Scott watched and treasured where they grew; the individual place or time acquired its special accent and distinction; the subtle aroma of place-names became once more an element in poetry.

'To Auchendinny's hazel glade,  
And haunted Woodhouselee,'—

such a verse struck a new note. Wordsworth had transferred the scene of *Simon Lee* without a thought from Dorset to Cardigan, and wholly altered the landscape setting of *Lucy Gray*. But to Scott the actual scenery of a story was a part of its life-blood; it died if trans-



planted. Hence the minute registration of details, the attempt to make 'an inventory of Nature's charms,' which roused the indignation of Wordsworth.<sup>1</sup>

And with the accent of locality there is the accent of the tribe, the traits which the usages and aspirations of a community force into the blood and brain of each of its members. Scott is the great master of the poetry which flashes from the intercourse of tribes;—a Border poetry in the widest sense. Campbell's Highland lays, Moore's Irish songs, were more distant and rhetorical echoes of the Celtic lyric. Hogg caught rich strains of the Ettrick folklore. Southey brought home the romance of Spain, and strove, with less permanent success, to render into poetry the great historic incrustations of national myth.<sup>2</sup> In a different spirit Heber and Milman painted Hebraic Palestine, and by their side, in spite of affinities to Wordsworth and Coleridge, must be placed the author of *The Christian Year*.

Somewhat late in maturing, Scott was lured into poetry by influences which he could neither adequately appreciate nor greatly profit by. W. Scott (1771-1832). Bürger, Schiller and Goethe taught him little but what he was a few years later, very properly, ready to forget. *Lenore*, as translated by William Taylor,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aubrey de Vere's vivid account of a conversation with Wordsworth about 'one of the most justly popular of England's modern poets' (not named), quoted by Mr. Myers (*Wordsworth*, p. 144).

<sup>2</sup> Southey belongs only by residence and friendship to that misbirth of criticism the 'Lake School.' Between his industrious and learned explorations of the myth and the mystic supernaturalism of Wordsworth and Coleridge there is no affinity. They approach the wonderful as mystics, he as a historian. They are prophets of the 'Renaissance of Marvel,' he a picturesque exploiter of marvellous beliefs.

gave him, he said, the first stimulus to write poetry. His first published piece was another rendering of it under the title of *William and Helen* (1796). Neither this nor the translation of the *Erlkönig* in 1797 rise in execution above the low average of contemporary renderings from the German, and they are not wholly free from the mawkish manner of Lewis. He could not here adopt the border-ballad style familiar to him, and he was too much under the constraint of tradition to possess himself fully either of Bürger's or of Goethe's. The historical pictures of *Götz* (translated 1796) certainly profited the novelist, as he confessed in his famous letter to Goethe (1827); but the subtle supernaturalism of *Lenore* and *Erlkönig*, so closely akin to that of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, was for him mere *diablerie*, to be read, as the heading of his intolerable version of *Erlkönig* actually suggests, 'by a candle with a particularly long snuff.' The accident which turned his eye upon the Border ballad was thus a pure deliverance. From a collector he became a composer, and the stirring pieces, *Cadyow Castle*, *Glenfinlas*, *The Eve of St. John*, *The Gray Brother*—if still touched with eighteenth-century rhetoric, yet contained strokes of rugged poetry worthy of the finest old ballad. They were included in the collection of the *Border Minstrelsy*, a monument which, for sympathetic insight into the genius of the folk-tale, is to be compared, not with Percy's *Reliques*, its actual model, but with the *Mährchen* of the brothers Grimm. Here, too, he designed to publish the old romance of *Sir Tristrem*, eventually issued separately (1804), with an excellent concluding chapter by himself. Finally, he designed for it an original romance of Border chivalry, which, likewise outgrowing the limits of the collection, appeared in 1805 as the *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The origin of the *Lay* is well known. A piece of Border

*diablerie*—the legend of the goblin-page—was suggested to Scott as a subject for a poem. The germ fell upon uncongenial soil. Instead of developing into a romance of witchery, it remained a mere nucleus, about which gathered in his imagination, full of the drums and trappings of old borderers and modern volunteers, a stirring but alien story of war and love. Scott could recount a traditional marvel with dramatic effect, but he could not provide a setting and scenery in which it would not seem incongruous. It was not to him that the dejected singer of *Christabel* had resigned his mantle. To that still unpublished and unfinished masterpiece he nevertheless, as is well known, owed much. It was recited to him by Sir John Stoddart, who had heard it from Coleridge. Coleridge's 'new principle' of accentual metre cannot have been very new to one so well-read in elder verse, but the wonderful music founded on it arrested him. Yet, clearly, he but half caught its rarer notes, and the man who thought M. G. Lewis's ear for verse-melody the finest he had ever known, had excuse for the failure. Nevertheless, he discovered strong and telling effects of which Coleridge has hardly a hint. He released the dainty metre from faery-spell, and set it to the tune of trumpet and harp, the clank of spurs, and the canter of troopers. *Christabel* seems to have had a further influence. The description of Margaret's descent from her bower to 'glide through the greenwood at dawn of light' (II. 26), with its hurried, iterated questions to which no answer is given, is palpably from the similar picture of *Christabel* wandering into the forest at midnight. But the differences are characteristic enough. *Christabel's* wandering is unexplained; she breathes an air in which reasons are at fault. Scott's heroine is made of more substantial stuff, and sallies forth with a very definite end in view.

But no criticism can ignore that signal excellence in the *Lay* which, since Dryden's *Fables*, poetry had almost ceased to exhibit. In Scott a great story-teller once more spoke in verse; and the palpable defects of the story told only threw into relief the genius which held its readers enthralled from beginning to end.

Some eighteen months after the publication of the *Lay*, Scott began *Marmion* (November, 1806). Two mighty empires had in that period been overthrown, at Austerlitz and Jena. It was not with Wordsworth's solemn foreboding, but in the high martial temper of his clan, that Scott prepared to tell of the overthrow of Scottish chivalry at Flodden. It was published in 1808. *Marmion* is certainly, as one of his critics said, made of better material than the *Lay*; it is also more carefully wrought, and the best passages are in their simple kind supremely good. But its power is more robust than delicate. The shadowy supernaturalism of the *Lay* is replaced by somewhat melodramatic crime. The romantic disguise and grim death of Constance, the dark passions and cynical egoism of Marmion echo Mrs. Radcliffe and foretell Byron. But Byron's heroes reflect him; to understand Scott we have to turn to the charming introductions, in which the singer of battles preludes to his chosen friends. Yet these recurring glimpses of the nineteenth century throw the melodramatic qualities of the story into dangerous relief, and Jeffrey's severe critique, which closed their intimacy and led to the foundation of the *Quarterly*, had much of the sting of truth.

This theatrical quality was not diminished in the *Lady of the Lake*, which followed in 1810, and won an even vaster popularity. It brought two fresh attractions. Highland lakes and mountains replaced the historic but homely Borderland: and the ethnological contrast of

Celt and Saxon was added to the mainly political antagonism of Scot and Southron. The darker shades of *Marmion* disappear. War is a shadow in the background which gives value to the idyllic loveliness of the Lake and the chivalrous courtesy of Fitz James and his foe.

The pathetic *Farewell* which closes the *Lady of the Lake* was symbolically true; Scott had struck all the notes in his poetical compass. With the exception of some fine lyrics in the novels, and in *Rokeby*, his work in verse was done. In his *Vision of Don Roderick* (1811) he suffers from comparison with both the fellow poets who nearly at the same time handled the subject. He had not, like Landor, led a brigade into the Peninsular, nor had he ransacked its archives like Southey. The characters are more elaborated, and Matilda and her English and Celtic lovers make a charming group; but they fall short of the similar group in the *Lady of the Lake* in brilliance and variety of colouring far more than is compensated by their perhaps minuter finish. In *The Bridal of Triermain* (which he amused himself by passing off upon his friend Erskine) Scott became in his own way a 'Lake poet,' as Wordsworth in the *White Doe* had become, in his, a minstrel of romance. Cumberland is for him the land of King Arthur. In *The Lord of the Isles* (January, 1815) Scott took up the most inspiring military subject in Scottish history. But the triumph of Bannockburn does not vie in poetic force with the ruin of Flodden. Byron's *Tales*, moreover, were feeding the taste for adventure on a more piquant diet: and Scott himself, finally, had already discovered the better way of prose-romance. Well might he say to his adjutant, on hearing of the failure of his poem: 'Well, well, James, so be it; but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed we must just stick to something else.'

Henceforth his verse was casual. The stanzas on *Waterloo* (1815) are to the description of Flodden as his Napoleon is to his James I.; and *Harold the Dauntless* (1817) proved a complete fiasco.

Scott's verse, as a whole, did not interest the great poets of his own time, and has not deeply interested posterity. In fundamental poetic quality, in magic of expression, measured by the lyric speech of Shelley or Keats, it is great only at moments, and, as it were, by chance. In epic quality, even, it belongs, evidently, to a domain palpably though not immeasurably inferior to that of Homer or Dante. It is touched both with the facile redundance of the mediæval romances in which Scott was steeped, and with the meretricious phraseology of the later eighteenth century, which he was too genuine a literary Tory wholly to put aside. Verse was not absolutely native with him as it was with Burns, nor could he pour into it, as Burns did, the rich colloquial idiom in which he thought and imagined. That had to wait for his prose. Yet within a limited sphere, or one which seems limited beside the immense range of the novels, his verse is extraordinarily expressive. In his battle scenes it seems to become a living image of the rush of steeds and the clang of weapons. He is the literary father of all who have since sung of daring rides by flood and field, of foes, from Macaulay's *Lays*, and Browning's *How they brought the Good News*, to Kipling's *East and West*, as Coleridge is the progenitor of that rarer vein of the modern ballad which culminates in Keats's *Belle Dame sans Merci* and Rossetti's *Sister Helen*.

The genius of the Borderland, in which John Leyden (1775-1811) Scott's keenest interest lay, was personified in two strangely gifted men whose fame Lockhart has made inseparable from his. John Leyden's poetic

production was almost confined to a few ballads in the *Minstrelsy*, but this wild Roxburghshire youth, in whose habits 'it was hard to say whether the moss-trooper or the schoolman of former days most prevailed,'—who at eighteen confounded the doctors of Edinburgh with his multifarious learning, and after becoming Scott's master, and guide in Border-lore, rivalled Sir William Jones in Sanscrit, and died in Java, chanting a Tweedside song with his last breath,—was at heart a poet. His *Elf-King* was contributed to Lewis's *Tales of Terror*; *The Count of Keildar*, *Lord Soulis*, and *The Mermaid*, are worthy of their companionship with Scott's own ballads.

If Leyden surpassed Scott in versatility of intellect, James Hogg, with all his grotesque eccentricities, surpassed him in ultimate poetical quality. Hogg grew up as a shepherd-lad

in the glens of Ettrick, deeply versed in all the ballad-lore of the forest. There in 1800 Laid-law introduced him to Scott, who was immediately captivated by his original character and history.

'Driving sheep to Edinburgh' shortly after, he contrived to get some ballads printed, but without attracting notice; and it was only in 1807 that, with much kindly help from Scott and grotesque advertisement by himself, his *Mountain Bard* appeared. This, like its successors, *The Forest Minstrel* (1810) and *The Queen's Wake* (1813), is a kind of offshoot or development of the *Minstrelsy*, which it was a fixed idea of Hogg's to outdo. The staple is always a collection of legendary ballads, set in a more or less skilfully imagined frame. In *The Queen's Wake* this setting—a Christmas gathering of Scotch bards before Mary at Holyrood—is so felicitous, and some of the poems enshrined in it, especially *Kilmeny*, *Abbot McKinnon*, and the *Witch of Fife*, so beautiful, that the public attention was caught, and the 'Ettrick Shepherd' became a

classic. He henceforth wrote abundantly both in verse and prose, and the profits of literature mitigated the many disasters of his sheep-farming. His spirited Jacobite songs (*Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, 1819) found immediate response. His prose tales, in particular the *Winter Evening Tales* (1820), the *Confessions of a Fanatic* (1824), and the tales collected in the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1829), are artlessly constructed, but full of graphic sketches of Border life. The memorable apotheosis which Hogg underwent in his later years, into the 'Shepherd' of the *Noctes*, belongs to the story, already told, of 'Christopher North.'

Allan Cunningham stood somewhat further from Scott, but his songs were equally due to the stimulus of the Border ballad. Born in Nithsdale, Dumfriesshire, he cultivated poetry while winning, as a working stonemason, the skill which qualified him, at thirty, to become the foreman of Chantry. In 1810 he supplied a number of professedly old lyrics to Cromek's *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*. The discovery of their origin won him wide reputation, and in particular the fatherly friendship of Sir Walter, who thought his best work unsurpassed by Burns, and had, moreover, a peculiar kindness for men who wrote poetry without neglecting business. His fault, as Scott told his 'honest Alan,' was diffuseness; his fine and spirited songs suffer from a plethora of refrain. He has not Hogg's vein of eerie fancy, but he can touch a homely theme with a certain wild intensity, as in *Hame, hame, hame*, and *Gane were but the winter cauld*, and *Red rows the Nith*. His well-known *A wet sheet and a flowing sea* is one of the best sea songs in the language. Cunningham made various experiments in drama, novel, and epic—some of them judiciously discouraged by Scott—



and did good service by his collection of Scottish song, and his valuable edition and life of Burns.

With a more original gift of song than Cunningham, Robert Tannahill owed nothing to Scott, who was but slightly his senior, and not very much to Burns. Like Burns he belonged to the west—he was a weaver of Paisley—and his songs (first published in 1807) stand, not less clearly than those of the Doon poet, aloof from the warlike or legendary ballads of the Border. His language is not, any more than Burns's, free from occasional intrusions of discordant Anglicism; but in his own dialect he has an exquisite delicacy, and at times subtlety, of phrase. His love-songs are fine examples of the Scottish gift of painting passion by the human and sympathetic traits of landscape. Several of them, like *The Braes of Balquhither*, *Jessie*, *the Flower of Dumblane*, are among the classics of Scottish song.

Some twenty years younger than Tannahill, and also associated with Paisley, was a song-writer of more various accomplishment and even finer gifts, William Motherwell. Born at Glasgow, he passed most of his life in the office of the Sheriff Clerk of its western neighbour-town. In 1819 he issued a collection of lyrics, *The Harp of Renfrewshire*; in 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, yet another echo of the famous pioneer work of Scott; in 1832, *Poems Narrative and Lyrical*. His last years were partly devoted to a life of Tannahill, and an edition, in collaboration with Hogg, of the works of Burns. His own songs include some in the finest vein of Scottish tradition, especially *Jeanie Morrison*, a beautiful development of the theme of 'we twa hae paidlit in the burn;' but greater interest belongs to his stirring ballads from the Norse—worthy compeers

of the Danish *kjoempeviser* themselves. The wonderful myth-world of Scandinavia, opened to English poetry by Gray, had remained, save for a tentative flight of Landor's, practically unexplored through the great poetic generation. It was hardly to be annexed before Morris.

From Motherwell's war-chants it is no remote transition to the battle-songs of Campbell,—a Scotsman with whom the Scottish lyric puts off its northern garb and becomes definitely British.

Thomas Campbell, the eighth son of a retired Glasgow merchant, had developed at that university a precocious command of rhetorical phrase and resonant rhythm. A long vacation in the wild western Island of Mull at the most impressionable time of life (1795) stored his imagination with visions of crag and ocean, of glaring storm and ensanguined sunset, of desolate nature and lonely men. He was a fiery revolutionist, too, and watched with eager interest the 'triumph of Freedom' in France, and its ruin in Poland. In *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799) these romantic enthusiasms were poured with much skill into the classical mould of Popian verse, suffusing without breaking its delicate contours. The literary public was captivated by a succession of impressive images, conveyed in lines of arrowy swiftness and strength. The most important effect of this success was the friendship of Scott, then just finding his way to the revival of the Border ballad. Campbell did hearty honour to the *Border Minstrelsy*, and himself tells how some years later he familiarized the hackney-coachmen of the North bridge at Edinburgh with the sound of the ringing strophes of *Cadyow Castle*. But Campbell's own first attempts in ballad preceded Scott's, and were built upon a baser model. Tramps over Border moors and eager colloquies in Border farms and shielings

were not in his way. He found more stimulus in the imitative and artificial Romanticism of the followers of Percy, and thought (as he told Scott) Penrose's *Field of Battle* 'one of the very finest poems in the English language.' It might, in fact, be taken for a caricature of Campbell's worst mannerisms. On this piece was founded his *Wounded Huzzar* (1797), a ballad of tawdry sentiment in a swinging rhythm which at once caught the popular ear. Campbell was, in fact, passing through the phase from which 'Monk' Lewis never emerged. But better fortune was at hand; above all, a little first-hand experience of the thunder and carnage of battle. In June, 1800, he crossed to Germany, whence the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* had returned a year before. The following spring he was present when the Austrians were driven into Ratisbon; shuddered at seeing 'men strewn dead on the field, or what was worse, seeing them in the act of dying,' and perhaps heard, in December, 1801, the distant artillery of Hohenlinden. He caught the fever of militarism. 'It would raise every spark of enthusiasm in your heart,' he wrote to an Edinburgh friend, 'to see [the French] marching with stately and measured step to the war-song of liberty.' It was in this soil that his own great war-songs germinated. The *Mariners of England* was published in the *Morning Chronicle*, January, 1801; *Hohenlinden* (1803), and *The Battle of the Baltic* (1809) were planned. 'Liberty' was not, however, the predominant inspiration of these memorable songs. *The Battle of the Baltic* was even devoted to what, however excusable in intention, was, in effect, an audacious outrage upon liberty. What Campbell felt and expressed with singular power was the terrible sublimity of battle. His battle-pictures have touches of Hebraic imagination, the 'hurricane eclipse of the sun,' or 'Her march is o'er the mountain-waves, her home is on

the deep.' But Campbell's sublimity hovers near the verge of the melodramatic, and one of these otherwise magnificent songs is marred by false notes like that which tells how the 'might of England flush'd to anticipate the scene,' or how a kindly mermaid 'condoles' with the mourners for the dead. Nor does he quite escape the *naïvetés* incident to aggressive patriotism; as when the victors, after hailing their foes as 'men and brothers,' proceed to demand that they shall surrender fleet and crews 'and make submission meet to our King.' Little of Campbell but these songs now survives, and that little was all published within the next ten years, for the most part after a prolonged 'polishing' which can only have heightened his native 'glossiness' of style. His other ballads — *Lord Ullin's Daughter*, *Lochiel*, *Reullura*, *Glenara*, *The Soldier's Dream*, etc.— show much power of manipulating to an impressive result that scenery of desolation and death, of red battle and black tempest, pallid cheeks and glimmering foam, which were the chosen province of this *Salvator Rosa* of the ballad. *A Dream* and *The Last Man* are striking and original fantasias upon this normal theme of solemn desolation; the latter of sustained grandeur and unusually pure and strong in style. Some years before these were published Campbell had settled in London (1802), married, and begun to dabble in journalism. In 1809 he ventured into the field of verse romance, which Scott had opened, with *Gertrude of Wyoming*. Neither style, metre, nor subject it is true, at all suggest Scott. Scott wrote of a land and people he knew by heart. Campbell took his story from a German novel, and laid the scene in a region of which he had the dreamiest conceptions. The narrative moves on with an elegant languor very unlike Scott's dashing vigour, and if Scott could have admitted the climax—the accidental shooting of the heroine—he would have kept it further

from the verge of melodrama than it is. On the other hand it is touched with a tender opalescent beauty which Scott never attains, and the Spenserian stanza is used with a skill and an avoidance of archaism which Byron only surpassed in the later cantos of *Childe Harold*. This virtually closed Campbell's literary career. He retained, indeed, a great prestige, fairly sustained by a notable critical compilation (*Specimens of the British Poets*, 1819) and not seriously damaged by further and inferior tales in verse, *Theodric* (1824), *The Pilgrim of Glencoe* (1842). The most important service of his later life was his energetic promotion of the University of London.

To the long array of Scottish poets, Ireland opposed one,—that 'sweetest singer of her saddest wrong'—who in lyric fame surpassed them all.

Thomas Moore, born at Dublin, of Catholic parents, had scribbled political satire and paraphrased Anacreon at fifteen. As a student of Trinity College he shared the enthusiasm and the friendship of Robert Emmet, soon to become the most brilliant and daring leader of the Revolt, without being admitted to his more dangerous secrets; and the melodious singer of heroes in after days began his career, it is not superfluous to recall, by standing, under rather trying circumstances (1797), at their side. Almost at the same time he met with the first collection of the then fast perishing melodies of Ireland, and he has recorded how Emmet, after listening one day to one of the most spirited, started up 'as from a reverie,' exclaiming: 'Oh, that I were at the head of twenty thousand men, marching to that air! The fine words that Moore presently found for it—*Let Erin remember the days of old*—were a less forcible but not less sincere expression of the same spirit. They might have been more forcible but for other circumstances. In 1799

T. Moore  
(1779-1852).

he came to London, published his liltng *Odes of Anacreon* (1800) and his luscious *Poems by Little* (1801), and promptly obtained, by a happy union of literary, musical, and social talents, a secure place in the fashionable world. At length, in 1807, he began the successive series of *Irish Melodies*, which, for twenty-seven years, continued to be equally profitable to his fortune and his fame. Both would undoubtedly have been imperilled had the words been penetrated, instead of touched, with the 'magic' of the Celt. How far this was from being the case is even excessively obvious now. The melody seems to us mechanical, the sweetness insipid, the language, with all its glitter, fundamentally prosaic. And Moore was far too anxious to be on good terms with his audience to be even as frankly national as he felt. The Irish genius is in his hands predominantly elegiac, even lachrymose. If a martial note is occasionally struck, as in the *Song of the Battle Eve*, the cautious notice, 'Time—the ninth century,' disarms political suspicion. If English politics are reflected on it is in language of studied innocence. The famous song upon the Regent's desertion of his party (*When first I met thee*), is ostensibly a girl's reproach to her false lover. The other famous lines upon Miss Curran after Emmet's death are curiously vague and faint. Moore is better as a frank Anacreon than as a gloved Tyrtaeus. The love-songs in a lighter vein, like *Lesbia hath a beaming eye*, and *The Young May-moon*, have an irresistible vivacity and archness, and at times derive from the music a certain metrical witchery, which neutralizes the commonness of the words. The *Irish Melodies* placed Moore in that trio with Scott and Campbell, who 'reigned,' but did not govern, in English poetry before Byron. In 1814 Messrs. Longman were willing to give the highest price on record, three thousand guineas, for an oriental poem which Moore

had still to write. This was *Lalla Rookh*, completed after many futile experiments in 1817. Moore was attracted by the sensuous glitter of Eastern life and Eastern imagery; he saw their value as literary decoration. He tells us with some *naïveté* how he vainly sought a subject for the style, until he at length discovered in the oppressed fire-worshippers of Persia a counterpart of his own countrymen. 'The cause of tolerance was again my inspiring theme;' and the spirit that had spoken in the melodies of Ireland soon found itself at home in the East. But, as in the Irish melodies, the theme is apt to be obscured by the persistent sparkle of the song. There is much beauty, nevertheless, of a somewhat obvious and facile kind, in the tales; some striking lines, too, of isolated reflection; and the prose setting is pleasantly touched with the humour which the East too often loses in the hands of the West. *Lalla Rookh* was followed (1818) by the only one of Moore's satires which still retains its salt, the *Fudge Family in Paris*. He had begun in 1808-9 with grave Juvenalian or Giffordian diatribes, *Corruption*, *Intolerance*, *The Sceptic*. They remained unread, and he presently discovered his proper weapon, the humorous squib, in time to exercise it upon two peculiarly suitable objects, the Regent and Lord Castlereagh. The fun of the *Twopenny Postbag* (1812-13) is delightful, but even half a century ago it was felt to need a commentary. The *Fudge Family*, on the other hand, though full of temporary allusion, is aimed with admirable effect at a perennial subject of satire, the Briton abroad.

In 1819 Moore paid a memorable visit to Byron at Venice, composing, as he travelled, his *Rhymes on the Road*—dreary efforts of a drawing-room poet to capture the poetry of Nature. Byron's famous 'D—n it, Tom, don't be poetical!' pronounced as they stood watching a Venetian

sunset, had merit as criticism. It was while at Venice that he received from Byron the *Memoirs*, which, at the urgency of the Byron family, he subsequently destroyed; and one of the *Rhymes* commemorates his emotions as he sat down before the 'eventful volume.' In 1823 he ventured to emulate Byron with his tame *Loves of the Angels*, and Béranger with the spirited and piquant *Fables for the Holy Alliance*. For twenty years longer Moore continued to produce witty *jeux d'esprit*; but he did his best work thenceforth in prose, as biographer of Byron (1830) and of Sheridan (1825). His prose romance, *The Epicurean* (1827), had a momentary reputation. Bereavement and loss of faculty clouded the last years of a life which, on the whole, somewhat lacked the stimulus of adversity. Moore has a secure place among the song-writers and among the satirists of his time. It is not unnatural to compare him with Béranger. But his purely literary talent obviously wants the sinew, strength, the racy flavour, which made Béranger's songs strike home. Béranger wrote for the hovel and the cellar, and caught the reluctant ear of the salon. Moore wrote for the salon, and found an echo, not in the hovel, but in the back-parlour and the music-hall. And the massive plebeian gaiety of Béranger holds more promise of power than the well-bred complaisance of Moore, who discharges his thunderbolts with a smile, and almost hides them in showers of literary sweetmeats.

The common daylight so brilliantly caught upon the facets of Moore's verse becomes a degree more common, and several degrees less brilliant, in the work of his friend Rogers. The fame of Samuel Rogers is confessedly due far less to his writings than to the singular prestige which he enjoyed as host and wit; as at once the Mæcenas and the Horace of literary society. A contemporary of Crabbe, he outlived all save



Landor of the great poets of the generation which followed his own. While Crabbe, however, at once struck out the original vein which he pursued to the end, Rogers caught a faint and sober echo of the successive fashions of poetry during the greater part of his long life. But the echo was tardy. In the crisis of the Revolution, as a young man of thirty, he came forward with an elegant didactic poem suggested by Akenside, but in form more archaic than his, *The Pleasures of Memory*. In the year of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Rogers was emulating the conventional rustic sentiment of Horace in his *Epistle to a Friend*. In 1814 he tried the metrical tale in *Jacqueline*. His most celebrated poem, *Italy* (1822), is a kind of pedestrian *Childe Harold*, the travel-record of an accomplished, observant, but unimpassioned dilettante. Byron's splendid rhetoric and the spell of his personality had to some extent concealed the essentially prosaic quality of 'descriptive poetry;' this has its full value in Rogers. He had, like so many others of his day, the sensibilities of Romanticism,—'for all things here, or grand or beautiful, A setting sun, a lake among the mountains,' but almost nothing of the Romantic subtlety and richness of expression. His literary force lay rather in his incisive wit; he had a tongue fertile in epigram with the sentiment of a poet, but too little imagination to suffuse poetry with wit, or wit with poetry, in the manner of Hood or Præd. Yet he held a unique position in the literary world. More than anyone else he formed the personal link among the various sections of English Romanticism: Wordsworth and Coleridge esteemed him, Byron and Moore were his intimate friends, and owed the beginning of their own intimacy to his introduction; and it was at his house that Byron first met and cordially admired the most upright, impetuous, and unfortunate of his future literary foes,—the laureate Southey.

Robert Southey was, as a schoolboy, already a scribbler of epics, and an eager reader of history and romantic poetry—Gibbon and Ariosto, Josephus and Spenser, and the *Arabian Nights*. R. Southey (1774-1843).

At Westminster his truant hours were spent over old folios, one of which, Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*, sowed the seed of most of his future work in verse. 'Before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem.' At Oxford (1792-94) he became a notorious democrat; but the naturalism of Rousseau was, in him, tinged with the more austere naturalism of Lucan and Epictetus, with whose book 'my very heart was ingrained.' These heterogeneous enthusiasms found vent, in the summer of 1793, in his epic, *Joan of Arc*, where the heroine champions republicanism, in the vein of Lucan, amid scenery full of visionary romance; as well as in a slighter and cruder piece, *Wat Tyler*, the surreptitious revival of which embarrassed the Tory laureate of 1817. In the spring of 1794 he first met Coleridge. *Pantisocracy* and the *Fall of Robespierre*, a piece of poetic bravado in keeping with it, by Southey, Coleridge, and Lovell, followed, and when *Joan* was at length published (1796), its heterogeneity was heightened by 400 lines of mysticism and science from Coleridge. His first journey to Spain and Portugal (1795-96) ended his pantisocratic dream by plunging him into the romance of the past. New epic projects began to occupy him, and the rich material gathered in explorations of remote and forgotten mythologies arranged itself round heroic types no longer borrowed from the country of Rousseau. He thought of Wales and America no longer as places of refuge for ideal communities, but as the scene of the wanderings of the

mediæval prince Madoc. A visit to Norwich (1798) brought him into touch with German influence. From Dr. Sayers he learned the irregular verse which became the garb of *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, and caught the fine ear of the author of *Queen Mab*. He thought Kotzebue 'of unsurpassed and unsurpassable genius' (to Wynn, April 5th, 1799), hoped that his *Thalaba* would stand above Wieland's *Oberon* and next to Ariosto (*ib.*), and meant not to rest satisfied till he had a ballad as good as *Lenore* (*ib.*, January 5th). To this time belong his ballads, *Rudiger*, *Lord William*, and the *Maid of the Inn*. Here, and elsewhere, his inspirations were thoroughly bookish. His eye, quick and alert, but not brooding, won poetic harvests only from books, and from books in proportion as they were remote from the life he knew. His ardently loved home and the beautiful Somerset country around it left his imagination cold; but the thought of an epic on the prehistoric Zoroaster or the antediluvian Noah kindled him at once. *Thalaba*, the epic of Islam, was finished in 1801. In 1803 he made his final home at Greta Hall, Keswick, where Coleridge's family were already settled, and where Coleridge himself, during 1802-3, was a fitting inmate. The days of intimacy with Coleridge were over for Southey; but he found a stauncher, if less stimulating, friend in Wordsworth at Grasmere. Here *Madoc* was completed (1805), and here, five years later, a Brahman epic followed the epic of Islam. The *Curse of Kehama* and *Thalaba* are the results of precisely the same principles and method, save that the irregular blank verse of the earlier became irregular rhymed verse in the later. *Thalaba* tells the adventures of a young Arabian in the effort to avenge his father; *Kehama*, the sufferings of a young Hindoo whom a father has 'cursed' for the death of his son. Upon these threads are hung the fruits of

busy toils in books of oriental travel and legend. *Thalaba's* progress is assisted by a magic ring, thwarted by genii, beguiled by allurements forbidden to the Mussulman; and in the woof of the tale of *Kehama's* wrath are interwoven *Suttee* and *Juggernaut*, *Siva* and *Yamen*, the ship of heaven in which the heroine is wafted aloft, and the oriental *Inferno*, *Padalon*, into which she is plunged down. In all this there is much rich and beautiful description. The fluent verse bears us easily along, like a great eastern river, by torrid desert and perfumed garden, magical mountains, subterranean chasms. Scott thought he had read nothing more impressive than the description of the approach to *Padalon* in *Kehama*; Shelley modelled the opening of *Queen Mab* upon the beautiful verses on night at the opening of *Thalaba*. The general public did not refuse a certain mild applause. Southey was in fact exploiting two sources of interest, one long neglected, the other almost new, in poetry: the interest of story and the interest of the Eastern world. Before Scott, and in a sense rather than he, Southey earned the right to be called 'the Ariosto of the north,' by re-introducing the poetic romance of adventure: and his *Thalaba* struck, with Landor's *Gebir*, the first note in English poetry of the orientalism revived a little later by Oehenschläger's *Aladdin* and Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan*, by Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, and (faintly) by Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*.

But Southey's epics lack imaginative wholeness. Through all the phantasmagoria of oriental adventure we detect the decorous English Protestant, Southey, animating his hero with ideals of virtue and good sense caught from Epictetus and the Age of Reason. *Thalaba*, as he owned, is but Joan in a new disguise. He was too 'enlightened' to penetrate into the inner genius of the faiths whose picturesque

beauty he admired. He stood on the verge of the two centuries between rationalism and Romanticism, participating in both, possessed by neither. He toiled before the threshold of Romanticism, while Coleridge stood already at its inner shrine.

There was, indeed, one region in which Southey fairly crossed this limit. No Englishman had penetrated so far as he into the genius of the poetry of Spain and Portugal. For the religious doctrines of Catholic and Saracen he roundly expressed his scorn, but he found in the brilliant ballads of their chivalry an untheological religion of honour, valour, and purity altogether his own. While Scott was busy with the Border lay of *Sir Tristrem*, Southey translated the last faded flower of Spanish romance, *Amadis of Gaul* (1803). When Scott advanced to *Marmion*, Southey was weaving out a cycle of Spanish song, the *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808). The French invasion of the Peninsula, in the same year, fired all England with enthusiasm for Spain. Wordsworth denounced the Convention of Cintra in noble prose, and joined with Byron in celebrating Saragoza. And three other writers of high distinction took up, within a few years, the old Spanish legend of Roderick the Goth. Scott's *Vision of Roderick* appeared in 1811. Landor, after equipping a force of volunteers at his own expense, and marching into Spain at their head, sat down to carve the marble iambics of his *Count Julian*; and the early copy which he sent to Southey found his friend already deep in his own tale of *Don Roderick*, the last and most human of his romantic epics. The Gothic king, hurled from his throne at a stroke by the invading Arabs, in league with a deeply injured subject of his own, and then, through countless hardships and rebuffs, organizing his broken people into an irresistible host, was as fine an epic hero as Bruce, Alfred,

or his own Joan of Arc. The actual passion of the analogous crisis before his eyes kindled in him as he wrote and bore down the bookish demon who might have turned the poem into an exhibition of Gothic mythology. And his rich memories of Spanish scenery and customs furnished him with descriptions agreeably unlike the laborious mosaics of his oriental epics. *Roderick* is not a great poem, but it is a brilliant tale, written in verse which has all the excellences of good prose, and in fact illustrates Wordsworth's theory of poetic language far better than his own practice.

In 1813 Southey succeeded Pye as laureate; ominously, for his verse in future rarely did more than merit the laurel of Pye. But his worst work had the excuse of compulsion; his annual New Year odes to the king, and the unlucky *Vision of Judgment* itself, were distasteful task work. To describe the celestial adventures of George III. was to subject the scheme of exhibiting the mythologies of the world in verse to a disastrous strain. This abortion of his own art Southey chose to introduce (1821) with an outspoken attack on the art of others. *Don Juan* had been launched forth in 1819, with a defiant dedication, reluctantly suppressed in print, to the laureate. Between Byron and Southey there could be no accommodation, and neither could judge the other. Byron thought Southey a political turncoat because he demanded that freedom should be limited by order and hallowed by home-sanctities. Southey thought Byron the founder of a 'Satanic school' because his poetry ignored all moral impulses but the passion to be free. Of the two, Byron's criticism was the less just. In genius, however, there could be no rivalry. Byron's masterpiece, the *Vision of Judgment*, published in the *Liberal*, 1822, extorted the admiration of a public which execrated it, and Southey's concern in it was remembered

with a persistence which helped to make his better work forgotten.

For twenty years longer Southey continued busy in his vast and ever-growing library, but now chiefly with *prose*. Prose, clear, buoyant, vigorous, was in fact his true speech. 'This desire [to make money]' he naïvely confessed as a young man, 'has already led me to write sometimes in poetry what would perhaps otherwise have been in prose' (*Letter*, January 15th, 1798)—a significant fact in the annals of popular taste. He had already poured immense stores of learning into the *History of Brazil* (1810); and his later life was largely occupied with a series of excellent and popular biographies, some of men already famous (Nelson, Wesley); others, of men who, like Kirke White, owe to his generous and sympathetic labour almost all such fame as they possess.<sup>1</sup> It is the prose of the historian, of the critic, of the letter-writer; but of a historian who describes more than he analyses, of a critic who points out beauties more than he penetrates or divines, of a letter-writer who touches with ease and charm all the notes of everyday life, boisterously jocose to Grosvenor Bedford, wise and practical to a hundred others, the large-hearted friend and the 'funny papa,' but who never approaches the subtle emotion of Shelley's letters, or the exquisite fun of Lamb's.

Accomplishment without genius, and amiability without passion, reappear, translated into an atmosphere of lyric exaltation, in the once famous poetry of Mrs. Hemans. Felicia Dorothea Browne, the daughter of a Liverpool merchant, published verses at fourteen, entered at eighteen upon a marriage which, after six years, issued in an informal but permanent

<sup>1</sup> Henry Kirke White (1785-1806) published *Clifton Grove* in 1803, other poems in 1804; Southey edited his *Remains* in 1807.

separation, and spent the greater part of her short life in retirement in North Wales, bringing up her five sons, and indulging a singularly facile and copious faculty of verse for their support. Successive volumes appeared at frequent intervals from 1820 to her death: the *Siege of Valencia*, in 1823; *Lays of Many Lands* and *The Forest Sanctuary*, 1826; *Records of Woman*, 1828; *Songs of the Affections*, 1830; *Despondency and Aspiration*, 1835. Of all the English Romantic poets, Mrs. Hemans expresses with the richest intensity the more superficial and transient elements of Romanticism. She is at the beck and call of whatever is touched with the pathos of the far away, of the bygone—scenes of reminiscence or farewell, laments of exiles and dirges for the dead. Her imagination floats romantically aloof from actuality, but it quite lacks the creative energy of the great Romantics, and her fabrics are neither real substance nor right dreams. Her expression is spontaneously picturesque and spontaneously melodious; and both qualities captivated her public; but she never learned either to modulate or to subdue her effects. She paints with few colours, all bright. Her pages are a tissue of blue sky, golden corn, flashing swords and waving banners, the murmur of pines, and the voices of children. She gathered her nominal subjects from the traditions of an extraordinary variety of peoples, for she read Italian, Spanish, Welsh, as well as more familiar tongues, and had Irish, Italian, and German blood, it is to be remembered, in her own veins. But the Cid, Taliesin, Cœur de Lion, Marius, and the rest, are shadowy types whose individual traits vanish in the glamour of the sweet and tender colouring everywhere diffused, which, being absolutely sincere, never fails of a certain charm, but only at the rarest moments admits the unforeseen touch that thrills. Some of Mrs. Hemans' most beautiful pieces were hymns.



We may pass from her to some other poets of more or less distinction who with her expressed the specifically Christian aspects of Romanticism, normally by a peculiar accessibility to the romance of biblical lands or of missionary adventure.

James Montgomery, the son of a missionary, born at Irvine in Ayrshire, passed his best years (1792-1825) as editor of the *Sheffield Iris*. Devout, philanthropic, Liberal and a martyr to Liberalism (he twice suffered imprisonment, in 1794-95, for publishing 'treasonable' contributions), Montgomery in a sense created the large provincial public which welcomed his first volume of fluent and catching verse. *The Wanderer of Switzerland* (1806), savagely reviewed by the *Edinburgh*, made him the accepted poet of Nonconformist England. Other pieces followed, on subjects chosen with the missionary instinct for things remote in time and place—the West Indies, Greenland (1819), the South Seas, and the World before the Flood (1813). The strength of these pieces lies in a facile descriptive fancy akin to Heber's, and a lilting but commonplace sweetness of rhythm. Some of his shorter poems (*e.g.*, *The Grave*) have touches of sober beauty.

Reginald Heber is better remembered as the missionary bishop than as the poet. Yet the two characters were in him closely connected. His early prize poem (*Palestine*, 1803), though in rhythm and manner quite of the eighteenth-century pattern, had touches of a feeling for picturesqueness and for the romance of locality which relate it to the school of Scott, who, it is interesting to remember, heard it in manuscript, and suggested a telling passage. The same quality gives a certain distinction to the best of his hymns (*Hymns for the Church Service of the Year*, 1827). His appointment to the see of Calcutta in 1823 was the fit completion of a life of which

R. Heber  
(1783-1826).

bishop than as the poet. Yet the two characters were in him closely connected. His early prize poem (*Palestine*, 1803), though in rhythm

missionary enterprise was the leading inspiration; and in India, after two years of heroic labour, he died.

Henry Hart Milman, Dean of St. Paul's, was a man of far more note in the world of literature as in that of scholarship. His *Fazio* (1815), though written in a style far too richly brocaded for dramatic purposes, was performed with success at Drury Lane; and he followed it up with a series of dramatic poems, marked by that inclination to grandiose and colossal themes which is one of the traits of English Romanticism in the period centring at 1820,—the period of Byron's *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth*, of Shelley's *Prometheus* and Keats's *Hyperion*, of the paintings of Martin, Haydon and Fuseli. *The Fall of Jerusalem* (1820), *Belshazzar* (1822), and the *Martyr of Antioch* (1822), all handle Biblical motives with much picturesque and some pathetic power. The first and the last (which provoked comparison both with Massinger's *Virgin Martyr* and with Lockhart's recently published *Valerius*) both lent themselves to harrowing description; but spirituality of temper, rather than dramatic instinct, led him to give more prominence to the tragedies of bereavement and separation than to those of the axe and stake. Milman was, moreover, already too much of a historian to be a fanatic, and the *Hymn to Apollo*, which the pagan young men of Antioch sing, shows a quite novel sympathy with what he calls 'the most beautiful and natural of heathen superstitions.' Yet the gulf was wide between this purely historical appreciation (in Southey's fashion) of a dead mythology, and the rapt and eager appropriation of the myth as the vehicle of his own nature-worship, which animates Shelley's like-named hymn. In their relation to history the two schools stood quite aloof. In 1821 Milman, as professor of poetry in the university, had an opportunity of emphasizing this

and other differences, which, if we may trust the report of Beddoes, he by no means neglected.<sup>1</sup>

Some two years before Milman definitely resigned his historical drama for history—his *History of the Jews* appearing in 1829—a poet of more specifically theological bent and of incomparably greater influence had issued his *Christian Year*. Born April 25th, 1792, of a family in which ecclesiastical tradition ran strong, John Keble entered Oxford at fifteen, and at nineteen became a fellow of Oriel, Whately being elected at the same time. With the so-called Noetic school, of which Whately presently became the energetic leader, Keble had little in common; but its pronounced intellectualism stimulated his dislike for the emotional piety of the dominant Evangelical party. He found more congenial nutriment in the poetry of Scott and Southey, of Wordsworth and Coleridge—to which he was introduced by a nephew of the last-named, who came up in 1809—and in Butler's *Analogy*, which we are told 'more than any other book, except perhaps Aristotle, formed the staple of his thoughts.' Of these elements, blended with the influences of the gracious English landscape of Oxford and Gloucestershire, was formed the poetry of the *Christian Year*. It is the product of a mind of singular purity and delicacy, allured into something resembling a catholic appreciation of nature and life on its way towards an exclusive sacerdotalism. The Keble of the sermons is already recognizable, but the ecclesiastic loses himself at moments in the poet. No one had yet written expressly religious poetry with an imagination so genuinely kindled by the glories of Nature. Many a stanza in his noble *Morning Hymn* recalls, hardly less than Wordsworth or Shelley,

<sup>1</sup> Beddoes—a young devotee of Shelley, to be noticed below, declares that Milman 'has made me quite unfashionable here [*i. e.* at Oxford] by denouncing me as one of the "villainous school."'

the language of primitive myth. The woods 'shake their dewy tresses;' the ocean gives 'such signs of love,' 'we cannot choose but think he lives.' These primitive traits belong, it is true, to Keble's genius rather than to his creed, and they are overlaid with a symbolic view of Nature, evolved by the Anglican priest from the *Analogy* and from the Gospels; so that it was the *Christian Year* which first convinced Newman of 'the sacramental character of natural phenomena.' Yet its persuasive power lay largely in the subtle verisimilitude of Keble's nature-painting. In particular, the scenery of Palestine, which he had never seen, was painted with the delicate realism, then quite new, which was soon to delight or incense the readers of Milman and Stanley.

In Keble, however, we touch the furthest confines of the school of Scott, and stand at the opening of avenues that lead to poetic haunts unknown and inaccessible to almost every member of the group. The rarity and tension of the spiritual atmosphere in which he moves allies him rather to Shelley and to Wordsworth. But while he thus stretches hands towards the profounder poetic movements to which we must now once more turn, his influence has traversed channels palpably aloof from that of Wordsworth and from that of Shelley; a quickening force, above any other, to the rich poetry of which Christian adoration and Christian asceticism have once more become capable in the century of John Henry Newman and Christina Rossetti.

### III.—THE SHELLEY GROUP.

Nearly twenty years separate the beginnings of the two great poetic epochs of our period,—the decisive emergence of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott (1798-1800)

and that of Shelley, Keats and Byron (1816-1820). The earlier triad had virtually completed their work in poetry some years before the later (all from sixteen to twenty-five years younger than the first) were mature; and the outburst of 1816 was preceded, as that of 1798 had been, by years sterile of creative genius, years in which Moore and Campbell 'reigned,' and Sir Walter's throne was filled by the sub-Byronic Byron of *Lara* and *The Corsair*. But the most original poetry of the elder generation, far from being out of date, was only beginning to find its audience, and the younger felt its power almost in proportion as they were themselves poets. *Alastor* and *The Ode to Liberty*, *The Ode to a Nightingale*, and the *Belle Dame sans Merci* show how deeply Shelley and Keats had drunk of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Even Byron became half-Wordsworthian among the mountains, and he alone of the greater poets of the second group, learnt from Scott.

But such discipleship was brief, and the emancipation which followed it complete and often bitter. The cordial and honourable friendship of Byron and Scott is less typical of the relations between the groups than *Peter Bell the Third* and the dedication of *Don Juan*, Southey's 'Satanic school' and Wordsworth's 'pretty piece of paganism.' These antipathies rested, in part, upon deep-grounded differences. Politically, the earlier group were bitter opponents of the Revolution; Wordsworth and Coleridge were even 'renegades.' The later group were all Liberals; in Byron and Shelley the spirit of the Revolution first entered poetry. The liberty which Wordsworth adored was from the first rather the condition in which men observe morality without outer interference, than that in which they follow the bent of passion without restraint; and both he and Coleridge, after their bitter disillusion,

learned to look on political laws, as such, with the idealizing sympathy of Burke. But with Shelley and Byron, liberty is a vehement and politically anarchical outpouring of individuality into action; an ideal more egoistic in Byron, in Shelley more spiritual and humane.

The counterpart in poetry of this political individualism was the *self-assertion of the artist*. Wordsworth conceived that he was most himself when he most admitted the impress of Nature, and his boldest imaginings jealously preserve the framework of elementary fact. Shelley held Wordsworth's theory of Imagination, but the world of rainbows and caverns which filled his own had no such intimate kinship with the actual one, it was controlled by the laws not of Nature, but of beauty,—beauty no longer only 'a living presence of the earth.' In Keats the worship of beauty became supreme. 'With a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration;' and he significantly blamed Coleridge's 'irritable reaching after fact and reason.' In Byron, with his far less subtle sense of beauty, the artist's self-assertion took a more defiant and lawless form, even to the abnegation of art; he did his finest work when he was pouring out mingled wit and pathos upon the chaotic adventures of an unreal hero.

No previous English poetry wholly satisfied men possessed by this mingled ideal of the republican and the Hellenism. artist, this passion for freedom and beauty—not even Milton, who came nearest. Rather, they turned their eyes to ancient Greece and mediæval Italy. And here their affinity becomes clear to one who, in years a younger contemporary of Southey and his life-long friend, yet matured only in the last years of Keats and Shelley—Walter Savage Landor. Landor was the first republican Hellenist—the first Englishman who revealed Greek

beauty without an alloy of the meretricious diction of the eighteenth century, which still touches the work of so fine a Grecian as Gray. Thus within the heart of Romanticism a 'classic' movement arose, which, more than any other trait, sharply marks off the later from the two earlier groups. Goethe indicated the fact in his symbolic way when he introduced Byron as the child of the Greek Helen and the Romantic Faust. But Romantic Hellenism had to contend not only with the expiring traditions of the Augustan school, but with the prejudice against everything 'classical' which these had begotten among innovators of every shade. The Stowey poets led the revolt against the Augustans in the name of a poetic mysticism which was quite as foreign to the Greeks; and the frank artistic handling of mythic story by the Greek poets appealed only at moments of experiment, such as produced the *Laodamia*, to Wordsworth, who repudiated all myth, and never appealed at all to Coleridge, who entered only into its mystical and visionary aspect. Nor had either any share in the Attic gifts of urbane wit and gracious humour. 'I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant,' says Hazlitt of Coleridge at Stowey, maliciously recalling that his host had spoken without insight of the *Georgics*, and 'had no idea of pictures.' The very term 'elegant,' as he elsewhere points out, was banished from the vocabulary of the Stowey brotherhood, and wherever their influence penetrated it disappeared from the language of criticism. Greek influence found access first in minds less touched by current literary controversies: in Landor, polishing *Gebir* among the wilds of Wales; in Peacock, buried among the Attic folios and marbles of the British Museum. Moore and Campbell strayed awhile along erotic or martial byways of the Greek world, Scott and Southey blithely ignored it. The effective expression of

the new Hellenism in English poetry begins with Byron's denunciation of Lord Elgin's spoliation of the Parthenon. Byron, though very far from a Greek, did more than any other single man to create the passion for Greece, and to lend it poignant utterance. The Elgin marbles, however, acquired for the nation in 1816 through the passionate urgency of Haydon, became thenceforth 'great allies' of the Hellenic cause. Greek legend was the chosen haunt of Keats, but to Shelley and to Byron Greece was also the first historic land of freedom, 'the mother of the free,' the fatherland of exiles. 'I will teach thine infant tongue,' wrote Shelley in 1817, when about to leave England for ever with his one remaining child, 'to call upon those heroes old in their own language, . . . that by such name a patriot's birthright thou mayst claim.' And Shelley, to whom all mediæval mythology presented itself only as 'superstition,' found in the myths of Greece a world in which his imagination could range, and his profound religious instinct embody itself, secure from the paralyzing virus of theological strife. In Shelley and in Byron Hellenism was thus sharply opposed to the mediævalism of the earlier Romantics—of Coleridge, of Scott; in Keats's more purely artistic nature the two were brought once more into harmony.

Side by side with the new Hellenism, there grew up a movement towards Italy, which also tended to replace the earlier mediævalism. The return to Dante was to be one of the most striking critical revolutions ultimately effected by Romanticism; but though he excited a growing interest, he was as yet understood only under certain aspects in England. The translation of the *Inferno* (1805) by William Cary (1772-1844), followed by the rest of the *Commedia* (1814) remained almost unknown till Coleridge proclaimed its merits

Italian influences.



in 1818. Byron celebrated the indignant patriot, Shelley the poet of divine love; to Scott he was repugnant; to Hazlitt evidently uncongenial, and Hunt paid him the equivocal honour of dissolving the concentrated poetry of the 'Francesca episode' into his fluent, slipshod *Story of Rimini*. This tale of Hunt's, however, with its easy graces and familiarity, itself illustrates the dawn of a far more effective Italian influence. Scott had read his great southern kinsman with delight, but Ariosto's worldly gaiety and urbane ease hardly found an imitator before Hunt. It was chiefly from the Italian Renaissance, again, that the later English Romantics caught that ironical handling of legend which so strikingly contrasts with the solemn fervour of the Lyrical Ballads. Tennant and Frere, Hunt, Peacock and Byron, introduced the spirit of the *Morgante* into English, and the four last, at least, were enthusiastic readers of it. All in their degree were masters in the art of presenting a story through a medium charged with humorous imagination and discursive thought.

Of the four great writers who dominate this group, Shelley and Keats in intensity, purity, and originality of poetic accent stand alone. Byron and Landor, far exceeding them in range and versatility, must, thus measured, take a second place. But Byron's effective career began some eight years before Shelley's and ten before that of Keats; while Landor's, opening, it may fairly be said, about the time they died, continued for another generation. Byron, who classed himself with Scott and Moore and Campbell, and shared with them the homage of their public before he shared its execrations with Shelley, thus links the Shelley group with that of Scott; while Landor's affinities, in spite of his lifelong friendship with Southey, and the boundless admiration on both sides, are rather with

the generation of Browning and Tennyson in which he was destined to 'dine late.' We shall deal with them then in this order.

George Gordon Byron, an only child, came of a reckless and unruly race. 'Lions and tigers,' he said, 'litter only once.' He passed his early boyhood near Aberdeen, revelling in oriental romance and travel, captivated by the Old Testament, indifferent to the New, overwhelmed at eight by precocious love, drinking in the fascination of the mountains, and already the 'playmate' of the sea. At Harrow he was violent in friendship and in hatred, daring in sport, ready to lead but reluctant to follow. He acquired in the classroom a taste for the object of his later idolatry, Pope, and devoured a library of miscellaneous literature. At Cambridge (1805-1808) he plunged into the freer life which the place permitted, indulged in alternate debaucheries of starvation and drink, dressed with oriental magnificence, and talked the dawn in with one or other of a little knot of brilliant friends. He was already a fluent versifier; but the electricity that was in him discharged itself as yet quite harmlessly through the medium of a smooth conventional rhetoric; and the glossy surface of the *Hours of Idleness* (1807) is hardly relieved by any individual trait. Brougham's contemptuous, but not unjust, review in the *Edinburgh* (universally ascribed to Jeffrey), stung him, however, to a retort which made contempt henceforth impossible.

*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809, is the last angry reverberation of the literary satire of Dryden and Pope. It is a kind of inverted *Dunciad*; the novice falls upon the masters of his day, as the Augustan master upon the nonentities of his, and emulates Pope's stiletto with a vigorous bludgeon. Only those who, like Rogers or

*English Bards  
and Scotch  
Reviewers*  
(1809).

Campbell, in some sort also maintained the tradition of Pope, came off without a gibe. But the invective, though as a rule puerile as criticism, shows extraordinary powers of malicious statement, and bristles with the kind of epigram which makes satire stick, when it is too wildly aimed to wound.

Disparagement so obviously insincere was not hard to forgive, and within a few years Byron became friendly, even intimate, with most of the English Bards who had not offended, and paid a glowing tribute to the supposed Scotch Reviewer who had (*Don Juan*, c. xi.). Moore, who began by sending him a challenge, became his closest literary confidant. To Scott, from the first a generous critic, he gave the most cordial homage which it was in his nature to give to any man, and the two kings who reigned in succession honoured one another with royal gifts. Southey, too, he met, and admired his 'perfect prose' as well as the personal beauty which was to procure a venomous compliment for the poor pilloried laureate of the *Vision of Judgment*. Wordsworth, for a moment at least, he 'revered;' to Coleridge he did essential service. But most of these pleasant passages followed the second decisive step in Byron's career, the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, in February, 1812. They are the commentary of the travels which had occupied the intervening two years (June, 1809 to July, 1811). The slashing apprentice now wears the garb of a 'pilgrim;' but the disguise is slight, and the pilgrim's staff is obviously capable of becoming a weapon as well as a wand. He visits, and describes with genuine emotion, still somewhat conventionally expressed, the antique shrines—Athens, the island of Odysseus, the island of Sappho; yet the verse leaps more swiftly and rings more true when he tells the heroism of Saragoza, or calls on the 'hereditary bondsmen'

of Greece to rise against the Turk, or turns with patriotic shame upon the 'modern Pict,' Lord Elgin, who plundered what the Turk had spared. To the readers of 1812 the *Childe* was at once a book of travels, a chapter of picturesque correspondence from the seat of war, and the diary of a new Timon or Zeluco in the person of a young and vigorous poet. Its effect was enormous and immediate. Byron 'awoke and found himself famous,' and a stream of minor 'Harolds' in Spenserian stanza began to replace the stream of minor 'Lays' and 'Marmions' in short couplets. Byron's next step brought him into more direct rivalry with Scott. The *Giaour* (May, 1813), the *Bride of Abydos* (December, 1813), the *Corsair* (January, 1814), *Lara* (August, 1814), the *Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* (January, 1816), were written with careless ease in the intervals of distracting gaieties. They are sparkling variations upon the same theme. The flagging interest of the public in metrical tales instantly revived when the hackneyed romance of Border chivalry was replaced by the melodrama of oriental crime, and Scott's flowing but often featureless verse by Byron's unfailing resonance and glitter. Love was no longer the decorous emotion which Scott depicts, but a voluptuous and lawless passion; battle was painted with a keener zest for blood and pain. We watch the hero carry off his mistress by night from her father's house; we see the bullet rend the flesh, and dawn glimmer on the rotting body and the gnawn skull. The dying agony of Lara is described with the minute realism of one who had been at closer quarters with war than had been vouchsafed to the Edinburgh volunteer. Certainly Byron's pictures lose in breadth what they gain in intensity. Scott's sympathetic and genial art gives us a picture of a whole society, in which the nominal hero sometimes with difficulty holds his place. Byron sees and cares for nothing in which his

hero is not concerned. Marmion's death is a single incident in a supreme national catastrophe; but when Lara's foes are victorious, they think 'their triumph nought till Lara too should yield.' But with Byron, even more than with Scott, the metrical tale was a mere prelude. Scott fell upon his true music accidentally, almost unawares; Byron's was struck out of him by the most violent crisis of his life.

Early in 1816 Lady Byron (they had been married, January 2nd, 1815) suddenly left her husband. Society, having no evidence on either side, took hers with fury. In April, Byron quitted England—flung off by his country 'like a weed from the rock'—to return no more alive. He proceeded by Waterloo up the Rhine to Switzerland. Settling near Geneva he frequented the salon of Madame de Staël at Coppet, meeting among others A. W. Schlegel—a momentary contact between English and German Romanticism which had no result. Of far other moment was his meeting with Shelley, whose *Queen Mab* he had already read with admiration. For the greater part of the summer they were daily associates on and by the lake, exploring together the scenes of Rousseau's *Heloise*—the first romance, as theirs was to be the first English poetry, in which the passion for Nature blended with and coloured the passion of love. Shelley at once acquired some of the ascendancy which a keen and daring thinker exercises over a vaguely sceptical man of the world; and Shelley's finer eye and ear for the vitality of Nature quickened and refined Byron's sensibility to the glory of lake and mountain. In this highly charged atmosphere, during June and July, the third canto of *Childe Harold* rapidly took shape. 'I was half mad,' he wrote afterwards, 'between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love inextinguishable and thoughts unutterable, and the nightmare of my

own delinquencies.' The violent and tragic severance of old ties brought with it, for one of Byron's temper, a kind of stormy delight. As he broke from the moorings of country and kin, and sailed forth 'where'er the surge may sweep,' the universe of poetry opened out before him :

'What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,  
Soul of my thought!'

The third canto reaches the highest note of rhetorical descriptive poetry. The finest strophes render the superficial and changing aspects of nature with an arresting splendour of phrase and a swiftness of music which easily conceal the absence of any approach to Wordsworth's penetrating touch or Coleridge's subtle cadences. The critics and the reading world received it with acclamation; and it took, henceforth, among the larger public, the place held throughout the eighteenth century by *The Seasons* as the descriptive poem *par excellence*.

The third canto was but the first-fruits of this memorable Swiss summer. While still at or near Geneva, he also produced the *Prisoner of Chillon*, the *Dream*, the beautiful stanzas to his sister Augusta, and the Shelleyan fragment, *Prometheus*. A visit from Matthew Lewis in August added fresh elements to the ferment. Through Lewis's mediation Byron made acquaintance with Goethe's *Faust*, and floating memories of it helped to shape into poetry the sublime impressions of the *Manfred*. Oberland, which he visited in September. 'It was the Steinbach and the Jungfrau,' he declared, 'and something else, much more than Faustus, which made me write *Manfred*.' Certainly *Manfred* owes to *Faust* little but the outer shell of a witch-drama. His spirits sing beautiful songs, but effect nothing; they exist only to demonstrate that *Manfred* does not need their aid.

Nature, to Faust the infinite Mother of living things, is for Manfred the wild comrade of his antipathy to men. Faust wearies of knowledge because it is not life; Manfred because it cannot satisfy a guilty conscience. Faust seeks totality, Manfred annihilation. The mountains appealed to Byron only as sublime solitudes; it was reserved for Shelley to unite this revolutionary individualism with a sense of totality less philosophic than Goethe's, but yet more ardent and imaginative. There are elements both of *Manfred* and of *Faust* in the *Prometheus Unbound*.

In the autumn Byron settled at Venice—the first of his four Italian homes. The 'sea-Cybele' fascinated him under many aspects. If he plunged without reserve into its facile gaieties, shared all the licence of the carnival, and made his palazzo on the Grand Canal at once a menagerie and a seraglio, he was equally at home when galloping on the Lido, braving the wildest weather on the lagoon, or studying Armenian with the monks of the island convent. As an ancient republic, too, which had but lately ceased to be free, Venice appealed to his sympathies; and the glow of her brazen horses touched him the more because they were 'bridled.' A journey southwards in the spring of 1817, by Arqua, Ferrara, and Florence to Rome, powerfully enforced these wrathful regrets. The *Lament for Tasso* (April) was a cry of indignant pity at once for the victim of tyranny, and for the great singer whose stanzas had once been the familiar chant of Venetian gondoliers. The spectacle of papal Rome wrought this mood to a climax, and it found utterance, after his return to Venice, in the magnificent fourth canto of *Childe Harold* (June, 1817). The perfunctory figure of the 'Childe' now at last disappears, as well as the equally perfunctory archaism. He describes the glories of ancient art like one

Venice  
Nov., 1816.  
Dec., 1819.

who had, as he says of himself, come out of the Florentine galleries 'drunk with beauty.' Byron had not, it is true, the finer sense for art any more than for Nature. But he seized on the human and pathetic aspects of the statue as of the mountain with unflinching power.

The springs of passion and humour lay near together in Byron's nature, and the fourth canto was followed, with the swiftness of a retort, by *Beppo* (Oct. 1817). *Beppo*. Tragedy collapses into carnival frolic; the Italy of memories and aspirations vanishes behind the sparkling frivolities of the Italy of fashion and *far niente*. Byron had at length found a poetic language for his gaieties. Tennant and Frere had, as we shall presently see, already applied the supple octave stanza of Italian to serio-comic narrative; but the comic element in both cases was largely derived from burlesque—almost the only kind of wit or humour which *Beppo* does not illustrate.

Certainly the wit which embroiders the slight story of *Beppo* is unequal, and has occasional deep descents; but it is of extraordinary facility and abundance. The vein of poetry he here struck had doubtless perils for one who took his art so easily; but it was singularly adapted to take the impress of the extraordinary personality which, rather than any of his performances, as such, arrests and fascinates posterity. He was well satisfied with the experiment, and a few months later began to *Don Juan*. revolve the plan of a vast satiric epic in the same vein. Between September, 1818, and November, 1819, he wrote the first four cantos of *Don Juan*. At that point its further progress was postponed by the intervention of a new personal influence. During the autumn of 1819 he first met the young Countess Teresa Guiccioli, wife of a nobleman of Ravenna. In the



following April they were formally introduced, and their attachment grew into an intimacy such as Venetian etiquette not only tolerated but approved. The countess, a true child of Romanticism, seems to have been moved by a genuine eagerness to save her poet from the abyss of low vice which, in 1818 and 1819, threatened to submerge him. Byron, on his part, gave her a pure and loyal affection. In May he visited her at Ravenna, writing on the way the five *Stanzas to the Po*; and at the end of the year he finally left Venice and settled in the Guiccioli palace.

The gray old city of Theodoric was for Byron the city chiefly of Boccaccio's pine-wood<sup>1</sup> and of Dante's tomb. The 'immemorial wood' is commemorated, with its cicadas, in the third canto of *Don Juan*. The tomb inspired the glowing *Prophecy of Dante*. It was a hand reached out across the centuries to the other great exiled poet, who, imperialist and catholic as he was, had yet sounded the first note of modern individualism, '*io te sopra te coronò e mitrio.*'<sup>2</sup> Hitherto Byron had shown sympathy chiefly with the physical sufferings of the victims of tyranny. He had lingered in the dungeon of Bonnivard and the cell of Tasso, and followed Mazeppa on his wild death-ride. In the *Prophecy* he rose to the less sensational sorrow of the exile, 'who has the whole world for a dungeon strong.' It has eloquent and stirring passages, but Byron was unfortunate in choosing Dante's *terza rime* as the mould in which to pour his coarser metal. Italian politics were now assuming an aspect which made the storm-tossed figure of Dante in reality prophetic.

<sup>1</sup> *Decam.* v. 8 (story of Nastagio).

<sup>2</sup> The words in which Virgil takes leave of Dante, *Purg.* xxvii. 142.

'They talk Dante—write Dante—and think and dream Dante,' Byron wrote of the Italians, 'to an excess which would be ridiculous but that he deserves it.' Byron scorned to conceal his sympathy with the Carbonari, aided them lavishly with arms and money, and found consolation—as he wrote in the fierce and truculent 'dedication' of *Don Juan* which Murray dared not publish—for the general servility of Europe in the 'late-reviving Roman soul' of Italy.

It was in this mood that Byron turned once more to drama.

Not, however, to the romance and witchery of Dramas. *Manfred*. In the place of mysterious sin we have political crimes; for Alpine solitudes the bustling intrigues of city and palace. Within little more than a year he had produced three plays: *Marino Faliero* (1820), *Sardanapalus* (1821), *The Two Foscari* (1821). As to the merits of these pieces, Byron's most indulgent and his severest critics were and remain pretty well agreed. Shelley, who put *Don Juan* at the head of all contemporary poetry, wrote slightly of the *Doge*. The comparison with Otway's *Venice Preserved* was inevitable and fatal. In passing from description to drama, Byron instantly betrayed the rhetorical quality of his imagination. In passing from rhyme to blank verse he betrayed still more glaringly the limits of his sense of melody; for no poet of comparable rank ever wrote verse so unutterably blank as his. This loose outer texture is combined with pedantic rigidity of plot. Byron was an uncompromising champion of the pseudo-classical 'Unities,' and in his wrath at the Romantic disparagement of Pope—'the most faultless of poets, and almost of men'—defended them in fanatical terms. Bowles' rancorous essay on his idol became known to him while he was at work upon *Sardanapalus*, and provoked him to a controversy less remarkable for critical depth on either side than for the admirable speci-

mens it elicited of his nervous and caustic prose. Neither controversy, however, nor conspiracy, nor political and oriental dramas exhaust the wonderful achievements of these Ravenna months. He was at the height of his powers. He had fully recovered from the orgies of Venice. 'Lord B. is greatly improved in every respect,' Shelley wrote to his wife during a visit to Ravenna in April, 'in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, and happiness. His connection with La Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him.'

The unpublished fifth canto of *Don Juan* written in the previous year and designed to close the work, seemed to Shelley to set him far above all the poets of the day. The Titan in his nature drew him once more to the drama of demoniac forms and forces which he had attempted in *Manfred*. Venetian intrigues yielded to 'Faustish transformations, compacts, and visions,—*Heaven and Earth* (Oct., 1821), *The Deformed Transformed* (Nov.), and preceding, and far surpassing both, the two superb masterpieces *Cain* and *The Vision of Judgment*.

The *Deformed Transformed* if, as Byron said, 'Faustish,' is also, as Shelley rejoined, a bad imitation of *Cain*. *Faust*. *Cain* is less of a reflection and more of a counterpart. *Manfred* was a self-centred solitary; *Cain* is absorbed in the enigma of the fate of men—compelled to die for the sin of their first parents. 'Des Menschen ganze Jammer' assails him as it does *Faust*. Alone in a family of timid devotees, he thirsts for life and knowledge, and scorns his parents for neglecting to pluck both. He is humanity working its way by force of intellect to its own intellectual inheritance. It is easy to read in him many traits of Byron himself, while the devoted La Guiccioli, already tenderly portrayed in the *Mirrha* of *Sardanapalus*, re-appears in the beautiful figure of Adah.

Lucifer, the light-bringer, is more like Marlowe's Mephistopheles than Goethe's. The other characters show little invention or resource. When the critics objected to Cain's impiety Byron very properly declined to make him speak 'like a clergyman.' That he had done for Abel, whose prayer is a sonorous pulpit composition, with hardly a single naïve or penetrating touch.

*Cain* was received with an outburst of now hardly intelligible fury. Scott, to whom it was dedicated, was among the few men of uncompromising orthodoxy who openly admired it. But a severer shock was impending. In 1822, after Murray and Longman had refused it, Hunt's

*Vision of  
Judgment*  
(1821-1822).

short-lived organ, *The Liberal*, at length published Byron's *Vision of Judgment*. Resentment for personal insult, scorn for bad poetry, and indignation at the flattery of a king whose private virtues were made to cloak his disastrous incompetence as a ruler, mingle in this unequalled retort. It is as supreme among poetic satires for the splendour and variety of the literary missiles employed as for the mitrailleuse-like rapidity of their discharge. The bolt aimed at the 'political renegade' glances by the way upon the laureate's spavined hexameters and domestic tea-table. The Southey passages, however, full of brilliant buffoonery as they are, yield altogether in dignity and permanent significance to the superb arraignment of the king.

Nearly a year before the appearance of the *Vision*, Byron had moved from Ravenna to Pisa; La Guiccioli and her relatives having shortly before been banished from Roman territory. There the Shelleys were then settled, and during the remaining months of Shelley's life the two poets were in continual intercourse. Here Byron completed the mediocre play, *Werner*, begun in 1815

Pisa  
(Nov., 1821-  
Sept., 1822).  
*Don Juan*  
resumed.

under the stimulus of one of the now forgotten *Canterbury Tales* of Harriet Lee. But the great occupation of these months was *Don Juan*. Suspended at the close of the fifth canto in deference to La Guiccioli, it was resumed early in 1822 with her consent, on a promise of mended manners. The story of the Don became more and more the channel into which the various currents of his poetry flowed.

'I meant to have made Juan,' Byron wrote in February, 1821, 'a Cavalier Servente in Italy, and a cause for a divorce in England, and a sentimental Werther-faced man in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries, and to have displayed him gradually *gâté* and *blasé* as he grew older, as is natural. But I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in hell or in an unhappy marriage.'

Such a program promised at best a cosmopolitan sequel to *Beppo*. But Byron, with his horror of being 'poetical,' habitually played the cynic, in prose, to his own poetry; and in the Venetian fragment of *Don Juan* he had handled his vulgar theme, often vulgarly enough, no doubt, but with an energy and directness unequalled since Burns in the rendering of passion. The Julia episode is an all but complete triumph of poetic force over a situation, the gross elements of which are nevertheless freely paraded. The Haidee cantos approach nearer than anything else in Byron to the ideal beauty of Shelleyan landscape. And even the seraglio scenes, farcically conceived and passionless as they are, are lifted into poetry by thronging felicities of description such as compose, *e.g.*, the portraits of Gulbeyaz and Dudù,

'like Pygmalion's statue waking,  
The mortal and the marble still at strife,  
And timidly expanding into life.'

Hardly inferior, however, at their best, are the pictures of

war and adventure, of storm and stress by flood and field. The grim realism of the shipwreck scene is a counterfoil to the sublime raptures of the *Childe* over the deep and dark blue ocean; the 'image of Eternity' now surges over a stranded ship, and is thick with dying men. The siege of Ismail neither rises so high, nor sinks so low; its merits are those of the best war correspondence rather than of the best war poetry. In bringing Juan to England, in the tenth canto, Byron entered upon a portion of his plan in which poetry ran some risk of being submerged in satire. And certainly the picture of English society is sufficiently caustic. But there were bonds of sympathy with England to which he clung, and which now became the nucleus of imaginations full of pathetic charm. Ineradicable memories gathered round Newstead, round Harrow; Scott and Jeffrey had long forgiven the petulance of his boyish satire, and were warm and honoured friends. Rogers and Campbell, Moore and Crabbe, he hailed as the leaders, with Scott, of contemporary poetry. And he did not refrain from setting in the midst of the brilliant world of London the most exquisite of all the reflections in his poetry of the infantine beauty of La Guiccioli.

*Don Juan* does not so much end, as cease to continue. His mastery of verse had not abated, but there are indications of declining imaginative power. Nor was he to achieve anything else of great note. *The Island* and the *Age of Bronze* bear the marks of decadence. In 1822 he talked of having no vocation for literature, and vaguely hinted at prowess in action. The failure of the Carbonari in 1821 had put an end to his bold and generous efforts for the freedom of Italy. But in 1822 Greece had newly uprisen with brilliant though short-lived success from a far deadlier servitude. Early in 1823 Byron was invited to join the committee of English sympathisers with the Greek revolt. He accepted,

and volunteered to go in person to the field. In July, after many hesitations, he finally left Italy, and, with a return of buoyant spirits, sailed down the Adriatic to Cephalonia. For months he coped single handed with incompetence and dissension amongst the chieftains, with mutiny in the camp. His power of ruling and of fascinating men had never been so manifest. At Mesolonghi he wrote (January, 1824) the noble last stanzas, with their poignant sense that the flame of life lingered for him only as a fiery ember of heroic self-devotion at the core of a heap of ashes :

‘If thou regretst thy life—why live?  
The land of honourable death  
Is here—up to the field and give  
Away thy breath.’

In April he died of fever, and three months later was laid in the vault of his ancestors at Newstead.

Byron's fame, unequalled in his lifetime, underwent a rapid eclipse after his death. In the next generation the influence of Carlyle told heavily against his cynicism, his insincerity, his merely destructive and revolutionary aims; the influence of Tennyson as heavily against his loose and random workmanship, his lack of the conscience in art and in ethics, of the earnestness, the *σπουδαιότης*, which Tennyson accustomed his own generation to demand of the poet. Subsequent movements of English poetry have been coloured by Shelley or by Keats, nay by Pope and Prior; but none has quickened at the spell of Byron. Even the transcendent renown of Byron among continental critics and poets of high rank—from Goethe to Brandes, from Hugo to Paludan-Müller—has but slightly reacted upon his countrymen. The grounds of this attitude of English criticism are now purely literary. A generation which idolizes Shelley is less likely to resent Byron's hesitant theological scepticism than to wish, with Shelley, that it had been complete and

unreserved.<sup>1</sup> But Byron lacks supreme imagination. With boundless resources of invention, rhetoric, passion, wit, fancy, he has not the quality which creates out of sensation, or thought, or language, or all together, an action, a vision, an image, or a phrase which, while penetrated with the poet's individuality, has the air of a discovery, not an invention, and no sooner exists than it seems to have always existed. A creator in the highest sense Byron is not: but no other modern English verse bears so visibly the impress of all the energies, save the highest, which go to the making of poetry, as his.

Byron had, strictly speaking, no successors, nor yet any predecessors. But the *Beppo* vein which proved so congenial had, as we have seen, been approximately struck by two older contemporaries, of whom a word must here be interposed.

William Tennant, born in Anstruther, Fifeshire, passed most of his life as a schoolmaster. He was W. Tennant (1786-1848). accomplished in many languages and literatures, not least in the older monuments of his own; and finally became professor of Oriental languages at St. Andrews. *Anster Fair* (1812), his single title to fame, was confessedly suggested by the old Scottish *Peebles at the Play*, assigned to James I. of Scotland. It has affinities with Ferguson's *Leith Races* and Burns's *Holy Fair*. But Tennant was a man of culture, and a schoolmaster, and the most varied literary reminiscences feed the scintillations of his parodic wit. Now it is the battle round

<sup>1</sup> A recent writer on the subject, Professor Brandl, of Berlin (*Cosmopolis*, June, 1896), whose knowledge of English letters and of English literary life are probably unapproached in Germany, ridicules the old hypothesis of 'British hypocrisy,' by which, in literature (and, alas, also in politics), continental opinion still continues to explain our insular eccentricities.



Troy, now Scott's Flodden, now the tournament of the Romances, that is playfully distorted in the Fair and its games. He is a sort of boisterous Scottish Pulci, and it is characteristic of his northern exuberance of humour that he heightens the burlesque effect of the *ottave rime* (which he took from Fairfax's *Tasso*) by Spenser's solemn Alexandrine close. But then, beneath this motley woof of parody, there pulses a keen joy in all the humours of Scottish life, admirably seen in the description of the heterogeneous throng at the Fair—where St. Andrews professors 'with curl'd vastidity of wig,' jostle with Cimmerians from the coal-pits of Dysart and linen weavers from Kilmarnock, toothless crones and barefoot lasses. And here and there a true poet's delight in natural beauty breaks forth for a moment undisguised, as in the opening of the third canto. But the atmosphere of humorous exaggeration seems to have been vital to him, and his subsequent works, a poem, *The Thane of Fife*, and several dramas, had no success.

*Anster Fair* had little vogue south of the Border, and was probably unknown to the writer who, J. H. Frere (1769-1846) five years later provided the immediate precursor of *Beppo*. John Hookham Frere had co-operated with Canning and Ellis, just before the opening of our period, in the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98). A somewhat too ample and too early command of wealth and leisure precluded the entire fulfilment of his brilliant literary promise. After serving as ambassador in Spain and Portugal, he retired to his estates, and in 1817-18 published the mock heroic *Prospectus and Specimen of an intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, . . . intended to comprise the most interesting particulars relating to King Arthur and his Round Table*. Frere stands in far closer relation than Tennant to the Italian burlesque of Pulci. His work travesties an Arthurian

legend, as the *Morgante* (1483) had done the legend of Roland, and is quite without the realism of detail which gives so much force to Tennant's work. Frere shows rather accomplishment of style than strength in narrative. Many single stanzas are on a level with all but the best in *Beppo*, but the poem as a whole is wanting in organic *vis*. Frere subsequently became known as the most brilliant of the translators of Aristophanes.

A somewhat parallel transition from a satirical and drastic to a poetic and imaginative type of humour is reflected in the career of Frere's rival parodist, Horace Smith. In 1812, the brothers James and Horace Smith acquired instantaneous and lasting fame by their collection of parodies of contemporary poets, *The Rejected Addresses*, a kind of work which, if good of its kind, often derives a parasitic longevity from the poetry it travesties, but rarely, as in this case, here and there, confers longevity upon it. As Frere passed from the *Anti-Jacobin* to Whistlecraft, so Horace Smith passed from the *Rejected Addresses* to *The Address to the Mummy in Belzoni's Exhibition*, a slight yet significant straw in the tidal current of literature, meditatively blending irony and fancy in a way not unexampled certainly before, but now for the first time typical and characteristic.

Horace Smith has, however, a greater title to remembrance, as the helpful and honoured friend of Shelley. He hailed the *Revolt of Islam* with a sonnet, and watched loyally to the last over the interests of the absent poet, more than once gravely threatened. Shelley, on his part, celebrated in a famous passage the 'wit and sense, virtue and human knowledge,' which were 'all combined in Horace Smith,' and is recorded to have pronounced a yet more significant tribute privately: 'Is it not odd that the only truly generous person I ever knew, who had money to be

generous with, should be a stockbroker? And he writes poetry too!' Let us avail ourselves of the pleasant pathway afforded by their friendship to pass from the Gentile courts of poetry in which Byron 'reigned' over applauding Europe to the recluse shrine where Shelley and Keats distilled its inmost ark of light and melody for the few.

In Percy Bysshe Shelley a physical frame of feminine delicacy and sensitiveness was combined from P. B. Shelley the first with indomitable mental energies. (1792-1822). As a child he peopled his father's house with phantoms, and found mystic companionship in its domestic pets. As a schoolboy at Eton (1805-10), he nourished a passion for the marvellous upon the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe (of which he scribbled two incoherent imitations, *Zastrozzi*, *St. Irvyne's*), but showed the poetical stuff in him more decidedly by his precocious delight in the rarer marvels of chemistry, and by standing up single-handed against the time-honoured tyranny of faggery. Visions of a universal reign of science and of liberty occupied his eager speculative intellect at Oxford, where, after a few months of intense application to the studies least current there, his tract, *On the Necessity of Atheism*, brought him into abrupt collision with the traditional orthodoxy of England. His expulsion (March, 1811,) alienated his father, and threw him adrift upon the world with narrow means, which he indignantly refused to exchange for wealth by an entail. His chivalrous marriage (August, 1811,) with Harriet Westbrook attested the same unworldliness, and completed his isolation from his home. In these years of ferment he was dominated chiefly by the influence of Godwin, whose name, no longer dangerous, could still enchant young men. *St. Leon* had helped to inspire *St. Irvyne's*, but it was the Godwin of *Political Justice* to whom Shelley, in January, 1812, made reverent

overtures. Godwin responded with genuine sympathy, but deprecated his disciple's fiery impatience for the millennium, even when exhibited, as it shortly was, in the strictly Godwinian form of strewing the streets of Dublin with arguments for Catholic Emancipation. In the course of the year Shelley finished his first considerable poem, in which Godwin's teaching is wrought into a woof of passion and fancy.

*Queen Mab* (begun probably by 1810, and privately printed in 1813, but never published with his consent) owes much of its poetic machinery to the orientalism of Southey and Landor; the aerial voyage of the faery car echoes *Thalaba*, and the irregular verse, though touched with gleams of higher poetry, is not palpably superior to Southey's. The ethical gist lies in the speech of the fairy. It is a cry of rage against the tyranny of unspiritual forces—of gold, militarism, and superstition—in the name of the faith from which Shelley varied perhaps in expression, but never in substance, that 'soul is the only element.'

Among the unspiritual forces, Shelley, like Godwin, reckoned the pressure of the marriage-bond. The gravest crisis of his life was his deliberate self-emancipation from a union which had become merely a tie, and his equally deliberate entrance upon a union of souls. In July, 1814, he had become convinced, probably without cause, that Harriet was unfaithful to him. He terminated their relation, and at the end of the same month left England with Mary Godwin.

In her more stimulating companionship his genius rapidly matured. The first sight, that summer, of Alpine snows and torrents kindled his imagination as the quiet scenery of England could not do; and the next summer (1815), spent under the oaks of Windsor, and along the silver reaches of the upper Thames, bore fruit

in the strophes written at Lechlade and in *Alastor*. In *Alastor* the influence of Southey begins to yield to that of Wordsworth. The blank verse surpasses, indeed, all but the finest of Wordsworth's, while entirely Shelleyan in its ethereal colouring and dreamy cadences; and he has learned to regard outward Nature not merely as an ideal and exemplar for corrupt man, or as a mine of pictorial effect and rhetorical decoration, but as a moulding and hallowing power. The youth in *Alastor* is of the kindred of Ruth and Lucy; he is 'nurtured by solemn vision and bright silver dreams.'

' Every sight  
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air  
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.'

The abstract 'Spirit of Nature' invoked in *Queen Mab* is now drawn into closer communion as the 'Mother of this unfathomable world.' But these Wordsworthian elements have been steeped in the wild light of Shelley's imagination. If he hopes to 'still his obstinate questionings' and to hear the 'tale of what we are,' it is from a source which Wordsworth never contemplated, 'the lips of some lone ghost;' and in Shelley's 'Nature' the quiet solemnity of Wordsworth's Cumbrian mountains unfolds into visions of unearthly loveliness and unearthly horror—glens of musk-rose and jasmine, forests of cedar and solemn pine, or lakes of bitumen. *Alastor* is the embodiment of this visionary quality of Shelley's genius, the self-portraiture of one who *quærebat quid amaret, amans amare*—a 'tameless' spirit, to whom beauty presented itself as yet only as an impalpable dream, by no means as the glorious vesture which familiar things wear to the imaginative eye. The most Wordsworthian of Shelley's poems exhibits their unlikeness most pointedly.

*Alastor* was followed by that memorable winter of 'mere

Atticism ' in company with Peacock and T. J. Hogg—from which the effective and vital influence of the Greeks, and especially of Plato, upon his congenial mind, must be dated. The following summer (1816) witnessed the yet more memorable second Swiss tour. His acquaintance with Byron was probably of more moment for Byron's poetry than for his own; but it was on a voyage round the Geneva lake that he conceived the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, followed, during an excursion to Chamounix, by the kindred and not less splendid *Mont Blanc*. Byron, the ex-Corsair, was fascinated by the storms and savagery of the Alps: Shelley, the disciple of Godwin, saw in them the abode of ' the secret strength of things,' in the presence of which human tyranny was self-confuted :

' Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe.'

Eighteen months intervened between the Swiss journey and the permanent exile in Italy. They were spent mainly at Great Marlow, where, through the bitter winter of 1816-17, the idealist practised energetic and open-handed benevolence towards all needy things that lived,—from Godwin, whose debts he paid, and the cottagers whom he clothed and shod, to the fresh-caught fish which he restored to their native Thames. Here, during the summer mornings of 1817, he wrote the fragmentary *Prince Athanase* and the epic of *Laon and Cythna*. The stirrings of widespread discontent which began in the year after Waterloo to break in upon the triumph of reaction, made revolution once more a kindling theme; and the *Revolt of Islam*, as its final title ran, is a beautiful romance of revolution. The passion for freedom and the passion for beauty are intimately blended. Cythna, who stirs the lethargic people to revolt, and her counterpart, the lady who consoles the

wounded serpent—the Spirit of Good—after its first futile struggle with the demon eagle, are ‘beautiful as morning.’ Shelley had read to Mary, among other books that summer, the *Faery Queen*; in *Cythna* he seems to have blended the virgin majesty of Britomart with the passion and comradeship of his hearer. Yet passion and comradeship were no casual attributes of this Shelleyan Britomart. Heroic effort for man, and union with a sister-spirit, were henceforth inseparable elements of his ideal; and the rapturous love of Laon and Cythna is for him but the symbol of their heroic self-devotion. But the *Revolt of Islam*, though full of poetry, is not a great poem. Colossal events are evidently going on in it, but their outlines loom indistinctly through the rainbow-woof of style. The Spenserian stanza was an unfortunate choice for a poet who never excelled in narrative. It is best suited to the dreamy movement of such passages as the strangely beautiful description of the voyage of Laon and Cythna after death to the Elysian isles of the ‘free and happy dead.’

Shelley had scarcely completed his picture of an imaginary despotism, when Lord Eldon’s refusal to allow him possession of the children of his first marriage determined him to save the children of the second by leaving the country. In March, 1818, the Shelleys quitted England for the last time. *Rosalind and Helen*, begun at Marlow and finished in Italy, preserves a lurid image of the agitations of these months. But this bitter exodus led, for Shelley, to a veritable promised land. The four following years are among the most illustrious in English literature, and they owe a great part of their splendour to the achievements of Shelley and Byron in the ‘paradise of exiles.’ The cast of his imagination had a natural affinity to Italian landscape, and found stimulus in the continual

neighbourhood in the actual world of visions long familiar.<sup>1</sup> The indefinable enchantment of Italy brought a throng of new inspirations. In the southern land, too, the poetry of Greece became more vital for him; and Æschylus and Plato were continual companions, whose converse was the very woof out of which he wrought. The four years fall conveniently into four sub-divisions, covering the periods spent respectively at Venice and Naples (Spring, 1818, to Spring, 1819), at Rome (April, 1819, to January, 1820), at Pisa (January, 1820, to April, 1822), and at Lerici (April to July, 1822). The first culminates in the *Julian and Maddalo*; the second in the dramas, *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Cenci*; the third in the lyrics of natural beauty and personal emotion, the *Cloud* and *Skylark*, *Adonais* and *Epipsychidion*; the fourth in the magnificent, fragmentary *Triumph of Life*.

In August, 1818, Shelley paid his memorable visit to Venice and Naples. Byron at Venice, afterwards occupying for some months Byron's villa at Este. The two striking poems produced there show that Byron's personality was yet more fascinating to the Shelley of 1818 than to the Shelley of 1816. In the *Lines on the Euganean hills* he bids enslaved Venice perish but for 'one remembrance more sublime'—that 'the tempest-cleaving swan of Albion had found a nest in her.' And in *Count Maddalo* he has given us a most valuable hint of what Byron could be in the company of the one poet of genius among his contemporaries whom he intimately knew. But both poems show a realism of manner quite new in Shelley. Few of his landscapes in verse have so much both of local and imaginative veracity as that Venetian sunrise with the

<sup>1</sup> Thus his favourite idea of a cluster of peaked isles started up in new freshness when he saw from Este the pointed summits of the Euganean hills.



domes and towers rising like obelisks in a glowing furnace, and the rooks soaring along the dewy mists, their purple feathers starred with gold. In *Julian and Maddalo* this realism is associated with a certain familiar ease also new. It is possible that this new departure may have been stimulated by discussions with Byron, who had finished *Beppo* a year before, and was then meditating *Don Juan*. Yet the familiarity of *Julian and Maddalo* is almost as foreign to that of *Beppo* as to that of the *Idiot Boy*. It is a high-bred, poetic familiarity, equally remote from the cynicism verging on vulgarity of the one, and from the rusticity verging on ugliness of the other; a manner happily mediating between the abstract intensity of Shelley's ordinary verse and the rich concrete talk of Byron, under the 'intoxication' of which it arose.

From *Julian and Maddalo* it is an easy transition to Shelley's Letters, some of the choicest of which were sent home to Peacock as they travelled southward in November (1818) from Este to Rome and Naples. As a letter-writer Shelley has, in his own kind, a hardly disputed pre-eminence among his contemporaries. Byron's brilliant colloquial prose belongs to a different category. Shelley's letters do not, perhaps, contain finer passages than are to be found in those of Coleridge and of Keats; but they are unique in fineness of ethical temper and unsought distinction of phrase. Without straining the limits of prose, they are thickly inlaid with felicities only possible to a poet. His correspondence hence forms a background to his poetry more various but hardly fainter in hue. Thus the letters from Naples supplement the plaintive stanzas 'written in dejection' there; and the famous description of the baths of Caracalla at Rome, with their 'flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees . . . extended in ever-winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and

dizzy arches suspended in the air,' supplements the lyrical glades and labyrinths of the *Prometheus Unbound*, which in the spring of 1819 took shape in their midst.

It had been growing up in his mind since his first arrival in Italy, and now emerged in all the rich complexity, and with something of the incoherence, which long incubation tends to produce. For the Humanists of the Revolution epoch the Æschylean Prometheus had a manifold fascination. Goethe in 1780 had treated Prometheus as a type of Man's shaping intellect, Byron, in 1816, as a symbol of his heroic endurance. Shelley's Prometheus unites both qualities with others more purely Shelleyan—the defiance which Goethe 'could make no use of,' the love which Byron lacked. Shelley revolted from the Greek solution of the myth which made Prometheus finally surrender. 'The moral interest of the fable,' he declared, 'would be annihilated if we could conceive him unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary.' But Shelley's ideal reformer could not be purely defiant. The earth-born Titan must needs partake of the love which 'interpenetrates earth's granite mass.' It is his first act, when made wise by misery, to recall the curse he had once pronounced upon Jupiter, and when all physical torments have been exhausted upon him, he is made to suffer a keener torture from the miseries of others. But this ideal is not carried through. Though Prometheus revokes the curse, he will not disclose the secret upon which the fate of Jupiter depends. Jupiter accordingly weds Thetis, and in the act of rejoicing is hurled from his throne. Then the defiant Prometheus, having performed his task, is finally merged in the Prometheus of Love, and his union with Asia—the Spirit of Love itself, 'life of life,' 'lamp of the world'—opens the millennium of universal peace. At this point, the close

of the third act, the dramatist ought to have laid down his pen, and, in fact, did so; but the poet, a few months later, resumed it, and added the magnificent lyric orgies of the fourth act, in which the Spirits of the Hours and of the Human Mind sing in rapturous chorus, and the Moon and Earth chant alternate movements of a cosmic symphony of love:

‘Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,  
Whose nature is its own divine control,  
Where all things flow to all as rivers to the sea.’

The *Prometheus* is a wonderful spring-song, thrilling with that ‘intoxication of new life,’ as Shelley himself said, which ‘the awakening of spring in that divinest climate’ inspires. The ideas of human society are still the crude abstractions of Godwin; but they are informed with so overpowering a sense of the glorious potentialities of life that they become merely the perishable framework of a veritable revelation.

*Prometheus Unbound* is not without evidences of dramatic power, as in the curt irony of the dethronement scene, and the suspense before the utterance of the curse; but it scarcely foreshadowed the great tragedy which followed a few weeks later. *The Cenci* was composed rapidly, at Leghorn, in the glowing midday heats he loved. The story of Beatrice Cenci, as traditionally told, had deeply stirred two of the most sensitive fibres of his nature, his sympathy for heroism, and for suffering womanhood. Familiar for two centuries among the people of Rome, it seemed to be a tragic theme such as Æschylus might have chosen. And Greek *The Cenci* is in the austere handling of its terrible theme. Without ever becoming abstract or shadowy, he yet lifts his gross materials persistently into the region in which pity and terror ‘purify.’ He makes

Beatrice slay her father, not to assert her outraged dignity, but

‘ Because my father’s honour did demand  
My father’s death ;’

and resist, like Prometheus, all tortures except those of the spirit :

‘ My pangs are of the mind and of the heart  
And of the soul, ay, of the inmost soul,  
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall  
To see in this ill world, where none are true,  
My kindred false to their deserted selves.’

Shelley intended *The Cenci* to be acted, and wrote disparagingly of it as a popular piece. It, in fact, excited a relatively widespread interest and went through two editions in his life-time. The lessee of Covent Garden, while rejecting it, invited Shelley to send another tragedy on some more possible subject.

The two great dramas did not exhaust Shelley’s production in 1819. The ‘Manchester Massacre’ of October foreboded Revolution, and he turned from his visions of ancient misrule to lash in brief energetic stanzas the living ‘Anarch’ Castlereagh. *The Masque of Anarchy* is the most important of his political poems, impressive by the very interfusion, which mars its literary congruity, of lyrical star-flights with Elliot-like strains of hunger and toil ; for in Shelley’s nature the worship of ideal beauty and practical helpfulness were inseparable. In December, a parody of Wordsworth’s *Peter Bell*, by Keats’s friend Reynolds, called forth Shelley’s savagely jocose indictment of the Tory poet, *Peter Bell the Third*. Both here and in the satiric drama, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* of 1820, his laughter crackles somewhat drearily ; and the one falls as far below Moore, whose *Fudge Family*

he seems to have emulated, as the other below Aristophanes.

Early in 1820 the Shelleys removed into the 'peopled solitude' of Pisa. The first year of their residence there and among the hills hard by, was pre-eminently the season of his lyrics of Nature. They are indeed closely linked with the great lyrical drama of 1819. *The Cloud, The Skylark, The West Wind,*<sup>1</sup> *Arethusa, The Witch of Atlas, The Sensitive Plant*, carry on in detached strains of even richer beauty the elemental symphonies of the *Prometheus*. His mastery of form was now complete. Plastic definiteness and delicacy of contour were added to his subtle opalescence of colouring; clear and thrilling melodies, yet full of waywardness and witchery, replaced his often vague and impalpable music. Nowhere else can we study so effectively the peculiar stamp of Shelley's imagination as in these marvels of 'poet's poetry.' Where Wordsworth's imagination isolates and focuses, and Keats's fills in and enriches, Shelley's dissolves and transcends. His revolutionary impatience of limit in the social world reflects itself in the perpetual opening up of new visions within or through the old; in the aerial 'translucency' and 'intertranspicuousness' (to use the apt Shelleyan terms) of his pictures. The bud shimmers through the leafy sheath, the moss-grown palaces beneath the sea quiver through the wave's intenser day, the light of the tremulous lily-bell is seen 'through its pavilions of tender green,' Asia's limbs 'burn through the vest which seems to hide them,' the poet is hidden 'in the light of thought.' The greatest of these lyrics, the *Ode to the West Wind*, combines with the highest degree of this imaginative quality the two other characteristic notes of Shelley's lyrics—

<sup>1</sup> Actually written a few weeks before they moved to Pisa, in November, 1819.

personal despondency and prophetic passion. He faints and fails like a dead leaf, as in the *Indian Serenade*; he 'could lie down like a tired child,' as in the Naples stanzas; he is 'a frail form, a stranger among men,' as in the *Adonais*. But these faltering accents become trumpet-tones as soon as he utters, not his own sorrows, but the woes of man. Then the weary child becomes a prophet, and the frail form thunders invective upon Gifford, and the dead leaf lifted by the wind becomes the lyre which awakens in it a tumult of mighty harmonies to quicken the sleeping world to new birth. Byron had longed to be 'a portion of the storm,' but only in order to share its 'fierce and far delight,' to be the comrade of its ruinous splendour. Shelley calls upon it as the far-sweeping preserver of the seeds of the future, the herald of spring which when winter comes cannot be far behind.

The second year at Pisa brought new friends and interests. Early in 1821 they made the acquaintance of Edward and Jane Williams, the companions of their tragic destiny. The Greek prince Mavrocordato was a frequent visitor. In November Byron joined the Pisan circle; early in 1822 Hunt and Trelawny. In February, 1821, the brief romance of Emilia Viviani reached its climax; in April, Shelley was stirred to the depths by the death of Keats.

The work of this year included some political verse, in a loftier vein than that of 1819. The Greek revolution called forth the noble lyric drama of *Hellas*; the death of Napoleon (May, 1821) the lines, 'What! alive and so bold O Earth?'—a wild *scherzo* amid the melodious passion of Shelley's lyrics. But the year was more peculiarly rich in the poetry of *personal intimacy*. The *Letter to Maria Gisborne* (1820), *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais*, and the numerous lyrics addressed to Jane Williams are poetic monuments of friendships as unlike as the poetry which enshrines

them. His friendship with Mrs. Gisborne was a purely intellectual intimacy; and the charm of this first of poetic letters lies in the exquisite ease and frankness of Shelley's self-portraiture. The *Epipsychidion*, on the other hand, is the culminating expression in modern literature of the spiritual passion for ideal womanhood. No mere rebellion against restraint, but the idealist's impatience of the limiting distinctions of the material world inspired the famous lines:

‘ True love in this differs from gold and clay,  
That to divide is not to take away.

The *Adonais*, again, is the monument of a relation founded solely on poetic fellowship. Neither Shelley nor Keats esteemed the other's poetry at all so highly as the impartial modern critic feels to be its due; Keats entreated the author of the *Cenci* to ‘ curb his magnanimity and be more of an artist;’ Shelley declared that most of Keats's work was composed on principles precisely opposite to his own. But Shelley at least did full justice to the *Hyperion*. As in the *Epipsychidion* he claimed the right of love to transcend individual limits, so in the *Adonais* he claims for genius the power of transcending death—of becoming one with Nature, ‘ a portion of the loveliness which once it made more lovely.’

Slighter, but hardly less exquisite, are, lastly, the various flights of song which commemorate Shelley's tender friendship for Jane Williams (*The Recollection, With a Guitar, The keen stars were twinkling, To Jane*, and the poignant *One word is too often profaned*); and besides these personal pieces we have a profusion of other lyrics full of delicate beauty, as, *The flower that smiles to-day*, and *Rarely rarely comest thou*. Unhappily Mrs. Williams was to prove even

less worthy than Emilia Viviani of the immortality which Shelley conferred upon both.

In the spring of 1822 the Shelleys made their last fatal change of abode to the wave-beaten palazzo on the Lerici wild Spezzian bay.<sup>1</sup> None of his homes was so Shelleyan as this. Yet he wrote little. The all but complete indifference of his countrymen numbed his genius. One great achievement only belongs to these months, the splendid *Triumph of Life*, which his death left a fragment. 'The painted veil which those who live call life,'—

'Life like a dome of many-coloured glass  
Stains the white radiance of eternity,'—

these familiar Shelleyan thoughts are here wrought into imaginative allegory, full of drama and pathos. Life triumphs over those that live :

'From every form the beauty slowly waned,  
From every firmest limb and fairest face  
The strength and freshness fell like dust.'

The spoilers are spoiled—Voltaire, Frederick, Catherine, Leopold ;—the great thinkers fail to know themselves ; the great conqueror, seeking to win the world, loses all. Love alone resists all transformation,—and here Shelley expressly recalls Dante, the singer of the triumph of love, whose linked verse he handles with incomparably finer instinct than Byron had showed in the *Prophecy of Dante*. Both poets found nurture in the universe of Dante's genius : but while Byron was characteristically drawn to

<sup>1</sup> It is no longer wave-beaten. A road now runs round the bay, between the palazzo and the sea. The interior seems to be little altered. When the present writer, by the kindness of the owner, visited it in 1894, a portrait of Byron hung in the salon, but, significantly enough, there was no trace of Shelley.



the iconoclast invectives of the *Inferno*, Shelley delighted most in the *Paradiso*,—whence Dante

‘ returned to tell  
The words of hate and awe,—the wondrous story  
How all things are transfigured except Love.’

The *Triumph of Life* was the occupation of summer days afloat on the Spezzian bay. On July 8th his boat was run down in a sudden squall, and the question with which the fragment abruptly closes, ‘Then what is life, I cried’—remained for ever unanswered in speech of his.

Shelley’s own life was one of those which most preclude an unworthy answer to it. None of his contemporaries lived from first to last so completely under the dominance of ‘soul-light;’ his errors in conduct and weaknesses in art were alike rooted in this supreme quality. He went through life possessed by a vision of ‘intellectual’ beauty which, without doubt, dazzled as well as illumined, and made his view of society at certain points grotesque and crude, and his earlier poetry a radiant effusion which only gradually acquired substance and definition. Beauty, to his imagination, was always in some degree a negation of fixed form; it implied a perpetuity of flowing energy. Hence his worship of beauty was but an aspect of his worship of freedom, and he seized with avidity upon the Godwinian formulas, which in their turn fostered his native bias towards the abstract. Immense tracts of the world’s rich concrete life, everything characteristically mediæval in literature, and all Christianity save that of Christ, history, institutions, business, failed to the last to touch his imagination. Save for a single situation, he was indifferent to story-interest in poetry, and unskilled to excite it. His metaphysical speculations owe little to the faculty which wrests a meaning from facts by grappling with them at

close quarters. But he has the grandeur of his simplicity also. Beatrice and Prometheus, supreme types of heroic endurance, could only have been created by one whose fiery revolt against evil had never been allayed by custom. And that intuition of beauty, at first so abstract and vague, gradually became under the spell of Italy, a permanent revelation of loveliness, which the whole history of poetry scarcely transcends.

Shelley died with the last volume of Keats in his hands. The youngest of the great revealing poets of his time, Keats was in some ways the most many-sided. With the profound veracity of Wordsworth, the weird touch of Coleridge, he unites Shelley's passion for and mastery of beauty. But the beauty he pursued was less visionary, more concrete, definite, quiescent; the beauty, not of energy, but of luxurious repose. It did not, therefore, ally itself, as in Shelley, with the passion for freedom; upon Keats, accordingly, the teaching of the Revolution neither exercised its stimulus, nor imposed its limitations. This of itself gives a unique interest to his work.

John Keats, connected, like Coleridge, with the Celtic borderland of the south-west through his father, was born in London. His undistinguished school-days at Enfield were long over when, in 1813, Charles Cowden Clarke, his life-long friend, set the poet in him astir by putting into his hands the *Faery Queen*. When he came up to London in the following year to walk the hospitals, poetry was already the master-impulse of his life. It was in the first months of his London residence that he 'first looked into Chapman's *Homer*,' with memorable results. Early in 1816 his verses won him the ready friendship of Leigh Hunt and his circle; and Hunt's library, of which he has left so fascinating a picture in *Sleep and Poetry*, now became the

J. Keats  
(1795-1821).

scene of stimulating converse and of not always unprofitable rhyming-matches. The release of 'kind Hunt' from prison he had already celebrated (February, 1815) in one of the earliest and worst of his extant sonnets. Hazlitt, too, he met and admired intensely, thinking his 'depth of taste,' with Haydon's pictures, and the *Excursion*, one of 'the three things to rejoice in in this Age,' but rebelling against his disparagement of Chatterton. Hazlitt on his part, always difficult to contemporary merit, denied him to the last even ordinary talent. A closer friend was Haydon, whose passionate enthusiasm for the Elgin marbles probably helped to elicit both the antique and the sculpturesque elements in Keats's genius. Among living poets of established fame he admired Byron and revered Wordsworth, who shared with Hunt and Haydon the honours of a sonnet (No. 14). But the predominating literary influence upon his poetry throughout 1816 was that of Hunt; and to Hunt he appropriately dedicated his first volume (March, 1817), prefixing a verse of his ('Places of nestling green for Poets made'), which happily illustrates their points of proximity. Spenserian chivalry and Greek myth alike were here approached through an atmosphere of dainty and luxuriant fancy, akin to though richer and tenderer than that through which we discern Dante's Paolo and Francesca in Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. And from Hunt, Keats, like Shelley, took the freer modulation of the old heroic verse.

Impassioned student of the poets as he was, however, Keats had almost from the outset been a close and eager watcher of nature; and traits of natural landscape flashed upon him with a vividness and penetrating veracity of detail which Shelley to the last rarely attained. Such lines as

'A little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves,'

were Wordsworthian in quality of observation, though unlike Wordsworth in their caressing tenderness of cadence.

The youngest of all the poets of the Romantic revival, Keats looked back upon it with a clear and triumphant consciousness of what it had effected. His *Sleep and Poetry* was the pæan after the battle of which the *Lyrical Ballads* had sounded the first alarm. 'Fine sounds are floating wild about the earth: happy are ye and glad,' was his characteristic way of expressing the quality of the new régime. Poetry, as it came to him, was not a spiritual vision, as with Wordsworth, nor an emancipating vision, as with Shelley, but a joy wrought out of sensations as exquisite as Coleridge's by an imagination not weird and mystic like his, but plastic and pictorial. The poet was a teller of 'heart-easing things.' The poetry of force was already repugnant to Keats; the lines, full of genius imperfectly expressed, in which he denounces it, show unconsciously how deep was the psychical gulf between him and the Shelley of *Queen Mab*. This 1817 volume is full of the evidence of Keats's capacity for friendship. His personal poems are indeed, as a class, his weakest work; but the *Epistles* to Clarke and to his brother George are both delightful examples of the familiar yet by no means vulgar handling of poetic things.

The little volume was reviewed with discriminating kindness by Hunt, but made no impression. Most of the buyers were too indignant at the palpable imperfections of their purchase to have much chance of appreciating its rare and wayward beauties; and the friendly publisher Ollier, who had admired it, repented of his admiration. But Keats was beyond the reach of disappointment. He had begun *Endymion*, and the next twelve months (April, 1817—April, 1818)—at Shanklin, Hampstead, Teignmouth, and else-

where—were mainly devoted to it. The story of Endymion and the Moon, ‘sweetest of all songs,’ had, like the kindred bridal-myths of Psyche and Narcissus, taken strong hold of Keats’s imagination, and thrown an enchantment about his moonlight walks vividly reflected in the Proem of 1817. How strong the spell was he now showed by weaving four thousand verses out of this simple myth. Part of the attraction lay, doubtless, in its symbolism. Endymion’s pursuit of the haunting vision of his love readily became a type of the soul’s passion for beauty, in a soul which as yet hardly knew any other. Keats was his own Endymion, and the poem, which set out to tell the story of Endymion’s search, became itself a sort of faery voyage after beauty, ranging dreamily through the universe of real and imagined loveliness, and gathering the wayside flowers of several other legends—Cybele, Adonis, Arethusa, Glaucus and Scylla, Bacchus and Pan,—which had no original relation to that of Endymion. And in these extraneous portions, particularly in the hymn to Pan and the ‘roundelay’ on Bacchus, the poetic reach of *Endymion* culminates. Wordsworth pronounced the former ‘a pretty piece of paganism.’ Yet Keats’s artistic instinct was by no means wholly Greek. Hunt, who pointedly recalled Wordsworth’s own ‘pagan’ sonnet (‘The World is too much with us’) in his review, was himself not wholly pleased with a work which carried to an extreme the unproportioned profuseness of detail—‘the tendency to notice everything too indiscriminately and without an eye to natural proportion and effect’—which he had gently blamed in its predecessor. ‘Poetry must surprise by a fine excess,’ Keats declared in a significant formula. At present he illustrated it, for the most part, by luscious word-painting, ‘filling every sense with spiritual sweets, as bees gorge full their cells.’ Yet there were already passages in the brief and pregnant manner that

culminated in *La Belle Dame*. Coleridge had spoken of the 'peculiar tint of yellow-green' in the evening light. Keats spoke boldly (*Endymion*, ii. 72) of the 'green evening.'

The true commentary upon *Endymion* is the Preface. In a few manly sentences Keats told his critics that he recognized in his work a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished, and was content that it should die, having 'some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.' The mingled modesty and pride of this avowal only irritated the critics, and his connection with Hunt marked him out for Tory invective which he had done nothing to incur. The *Quarterly* (October, 1818) contained a short, insolent notice, probably by Croker, now memorable only for the two protests, in weighty prose and impassioned verse, which it called forth from Shelley; and *Blackwood* (August, 1818) venomously warned the poetic apprentice back to his surgery. To these reviews was due the phantasm 'Johnny Keats,' the effeminate weakling who, according to a now long exploded superstition, was 'snuff'd out by an article.' The real Keats dismissed the attack with admirable dignity. 'I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public,' he wrote to Reynolds before the publication, 'or to anything else in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of Great Men.' And afterwards (*To Hessey*, October, 1818): 'Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception and rectification of what is fine.'

He was already, as he said, 'plotting.' In the early spring of 1818 he planned, with his friend Reynolds, a joint volume of Tales from Boccaccio. Keats's contribution, *Isabella*, was finished in June. The original (*Decam.* iv. 5) is a commonplace treatment of a theme full of romantic suggestion; Keats disclosed with exquisite penetration its native poetic quality. The modest passion of Lorenzo and Isabel is as superior in art as in ethics to the vulgar intrigue which in Boccaccio half justifies her brothers' vengeance. The dream which discloses his murder is in Boccaccio merely a matter-of-fact recital of events; Keats turns it into a strangely beautiful picture of the shadowy life of the slain in his forest grave, with the red whortleberries and chestnut trees overhead, and the sheep-fold bleat from beyond the river, and glossy bees, and many a chapel bell; but all these 'little sounds of life' are growing strange to him, for now he is 'a shadow upon the skirts of human nature dwelling alone.' Nor does Keats shrink from the less romantic side of life. He shows us the red-ruled ledger, undisguised, but through an atmosphere of fiery compassion for the weary hands that 'swelted' in mine and factory, and the 'Ceylon diver that went all naked to the hungry shark' (st. 15), to earn the wealth it recorded. It was probably an advantage for Keats, even as an artist, to be led from the dream-world of myth to this tale of human passion and action. Yet it can hardly be said that his hold upon either passion or action as yet equals his hold upon sense-material. The movement of the story is still at moments embarrassed by the wealth of poetry, and the drawing of passion is, save for a few poignant touches, rather tender than potent. Nevertheless, the advance in art upon the almost contemporary *Endymion* is very great.

Not only was Keats's art growing ; his conception of the work of the poet, and of the demands it makes upon character and intellect, grew likewise. His letters of 1818 show that his hitherto absorbing passion for beauty was beginning to admit the rivalry of the desire to think and to act. He proposes (April, 1818) to learn Greek and Italian, 'and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a year's time the best metaphysical road I can take. For although I take poetry to be chief, yet there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among books. . . . I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good to the world. . . . There is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study and thought. I will pursue it, and for that end purpose retiring some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love of philosophy. Were I calculated for the former, I should be glad. But as I am not, I shall turn all my soul to the latter.' The *Isabella* was hardly completed when he undertook, with his friend C. A. Browne, a foot-tour in Scotland. 'I should not have consented to these four months tramping in the Highlands, . . . but that I thought it would give me more experience, rub off more prejudice, use me to more hardship, identify finer scenes, load me with grander mountains, and strengthen more my reach in poetry than would stopping at home among my books (July, 1818).

The tour produced little poetry of worth, and its 'hardships' told fatally upon his health ; but this first experience of mountain grandeur left its trace in the colossal forms of the poem which he took up after his return (August, 1818). *Hyperion* was the fulfilment of the wish, expressed in the preface of *Endymion*, to touch once more the mythology of Greece 'before I bid it farewell.' But he approached it now under a literary influence very unlike that of Hunt



In Milton he found a poet who, with 'an exquisite passion,' like his own, 'for poetical luxury,' had yet preferred 'the ardours to the pleasures of song.'<sup>1</sup> His delight in *Paradise Lost* grew daily, and he sought to emulate its classical severity. In the theme of *Paradise Lost*, too, he found something akin to his own,—a cosmic struggle of the powers of heaven, the triumph and fall of godlike beings. But Keats's mythology involved a quite different order of ideas. The overthrow of Saturn by the young and glorious Jove is a part of the gradual subjugation of the universe by beauty:

'for 'tis the eternal law  
That first in beauty should be first in might.'

How Keats would have worked this out we can only guess, since he broke off early in the third of his intended ten books. But it is clear that Hyperion, the sun-god of the old order, and Apollo the sun-god of the new, stand in some sort for the contrast between the splendour of physical light, and the richer beauty which is irradiated by memory and thought. In this colossal world Keats shows no sign of strangeness. His imagination, hitherto wont to luxuriate in the 'foreground' loveliness of bower and dell, adapts itself with ease to a scenery of vast aerial perspective. Fragment as it is, *Hyperion* remains one of the few supreme triumphs in the modern poetry of ancient myth. The austere influence of Milton stripped peremptorily away the remnants of effeminacy from his style without impairing its rich beauty; and thus *Hyperion* called forth astonished tributes from contemporaries who, like Byron, believed in 'Johnny Keats,' or, like Shelley, were repelled by most of his other work. To Keats himself, however, the manner which he had with so much apparent

<sup>1</sup> Letter, quoted by Forman, iii. 19.

ease assumed, was only partially congenial. 'Miltonic inversions' were repugnant to his perfectly English sense of style. *Hyperion*, fitfully composed from the first, was at last, after long lying by, abandoned, save for the unfortunate attempt a few months later (November, 1819) to re-write it as the *Vision of Hyperion*. While still nominally occupied with it, he had turned aside (in January, 1819) to write the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and by the autumn there had followed, besides, the fragmentary *Eve of St. Mark's*, *Lamia*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and the six odes. It is in the first that we best see Keats's affinity to Chatterton, to whose memory he had already dedicated *Endymion*. Chatterton was, in fact, Keats's most evident precursor in the Romanticism of richly-decorated narrative such as that of *St. Agnes*, full of old-world hues, but without any mystic touch, as Coleridge was in the Romanticism of weird suggestion, on the whole so foreign to him, but of which he shows so consummate a mastery in the *Belle Dame*. The dreamy indecision of outline which is so strangely effective in *Christabel* has no part in the story of Porphyro and Madeline. He does not seek to suggest, but to express to the last possibility of expression. Every detail stands out with the definiteness of reality, and yet with the harmonious richness of painting. The old Beadsman in the 'bitter chill' at the outset is drawn with a sensitiveness like that which animates Chatterton's ballad of Charity; and from this cold landscape of gray and silver, of wintry torpor and rigour, we are gradually led up to the incomparable glow and fragrance of the central scene, relieved, again, in its quiet intensity of gracious passion, against the clamour of coarse revelry in the far-off hall. The Spenserian stanza, substituted for the octave of *Isabella*, is in keeping with its fuller harmonies; and Spenser himself rarely equals Keats's final Alexandrines (e.g., that

of st. 27, 'As though a rose should shut and be a bud again'), in felicity at once inevitable and unforeseen. The beauty of *St. Agnes' Eve* is perhaps somewhat cloying, but how little this sprang from a morbid sensuousness is apparent from the *Belle Dame*, a masterpiece of horror-stricken reticence and magical suggestion. On the other hand, in *Lamia* he applied to a kindred story of enchantment all the insistent realism of detail before displayed in the human world of the *Isabella* and the *St. Agnes*, returning, however, under the influence of Dryden, from the stanza, to the continuous heroics of *Endymion*. But the exquisite lawlessness of *Endymion* is now chastened, by the study of Dryden's supple and sinewy narrative style, to a 'lithe, serpentine energy,' as has aptly been said, in keeping with the subject.

It is suggestive to contrast this serpent-maiden with Coleridge's *Geraldine*. *Lamia* has no touch of the eeriness which in *Christabel* is gradually evoked, not by description, but by persistently refraining to describe. Instead of fostering the sense of mystery, Keats precludes it by giving us at the very outset a picture of the serpent-lady and her torturing transformation, which fastens upon the mind (to use one of his vivid phrases) 'as the lava ravishes the mead.' We have passed here from the supernaturalism of the mystic to that of the artist; from the poetry in which the marvellous is felt as a mystic clue to the unseen world, to that which handles it with the *naïveté* of the Greeks, as part of the familiar presence of Nature. The climax of *Lamia* is significant. When about to tell how the enchantment evoked by the witch-maiden is dissolved by the 'sophist's eye,' he breaks into a bitter reflection at 'cold philosophy' as destructive of all charm and beauty. Beauty at all times 'teased' him out of thought, and his inspirations were so sudden and so unsought (in his own fine

phrase, 'like Adam's dream, he awoke and found it truth'), that he with difficulty allowed truth to be attainable by any other method. 'Beauty is Truth.' 'I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be.' To this vein Keats has given a marvellously rich poetic expression in *Lamia*, where 'but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.'

Yet this was an incomplete expression of Keats's nature, and the odes, into which Keats was during this Odes. spring and summer putting his most consummate work, stand out not more by poignancy of feeling than by the fineness of their meditative texture. The two great odes *To a Nightingale* and *On a Grecian Urn*, have as their common starting-point, a mood of despondent contemplation of life, in which beauty perishes and passion cloys; whence the one finds refuge in the magic of Romance, and the other in the ideal eternity of Art. The (incomplete) *Ode on Melancholy*, on the other hand, expressed, in imagery unsurpassed for solemn splendour, the complex mood in which the richness of joy is blended with the sense of its fugitiveness—

• Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine.

The *Ode to Indolence* is chiefly interesting because we happen to possess (in a letter of February, 1819), as Rossetti recognized, a vivid record of the mood in which it was written. The *Ode to Psyche*, more carefully laboured than the rest, is a last, half-playful, return to the Endymion-like freedom of the pagan-world. Finally, in the *Autumn*, all the pangs of romantic longing and classic aspiration and foreboding pass over into a brooding and mellow content—the mood of autumn, disturbed by no regret for the

songs of spring ('Think not of them—thou hast thy music too'), by no foreboding of winter; but likewise also impelled by no forefeeling of the spring that should follow, to utter, like Shelley in his far greater autumn ode, 'the trumpet of a prophecy.' Both odes are masterpieces, and each is intense with the choicest qualities of either poet—every rift of the one loaded with ore, every line of the other winged with lyric impulse.

The ode to *Autumn* (September, 1819), in spite of its absence of foreboding, was almost the last great achievement of Keats. His attachment to Fanny Brawne, which had probably stimulated the brilliant poetry of the spring, became, towards winter, a consuming passion which unnerved the poet as well as the man. He yielded to the fascination of forms of literature for which he was only partially gifted,—fantastic satire, in the *Cap and Bells*, and drama (*Otho the Great*, *King Stephen*). Early in 1820 came the discovery of his fatal illness. The remaining thirteen months were, as he was wont to say, a 'posthumous life,' in which the lover indeed remained as ardent as ever, and the friend as true, but in which the poet was almost silent. His last verse ('Bright star would I were steadfast as thou art,') written, in September, 1820, off the English coast, was one of the finest of his sonnets,—a kind of work in which he is, for a poet of his powers, signally unequal and insecure. After lingering at Rome under the care of the devoted Severn, he died in February, 1821.

'I am certain of nothing,' wrote Keats once, 'but the holiness of the heart's affections, and the Truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not.' The youngest of the great race of poets uttered with more unqualified boldness than any of them, the faith that was implicit in them all. But Keats's imagination had peculiar and splendid

qualities of its own. He 'pursued the principle of Beauty in all things;' and he pursued it, with less of intellectual abstraction, doubtless, than Shelley, but not with less impersonal self-devotion. To Shelley, with his gaze fixed upon the 'Life of Life' glowing through the sensuous veil, the individualities of the sense-world became fluid and indistinct; but to Keats, beauty was so deeply inwrought with the secret heart and story of the individual nature, and he pressed home to it with such rapt absorption of gaze, that his details often overpower the mass, and are almost always more remarkable for isolated splendour than for perfectly sustained and harmonious power. He characteristically admired Kean for 'delivering himself up to the instant feeling, without a shadow of a thought about anything else.' This power of projecting himself into other natures, Keats had in rich measure. 'If a sparrow comes before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.' He even contrasted this quality of his, not quite justly, with the 'egoistic sublime' of Wordsworth. But his command of the springs of beauty was certainly wider than Wordsworth's. Mountains, indeed, despite some fine glimpses, were not his domain; but as a revealer of bird-truth and of flower-truth he is Wordsworth's equal, and he is at the same time a 'glorious denizen' of the Hellenic world which Wordsworth, save for one noble song, committed to the dead past, and of the mediæval world in which he was absolutely strange.

The definite influence of Keats and Shelley begins, not with Wells or Reynolds, the familiars of T. L. Beddoes (1803-1849). the one, far less with Peacock, the friend and satirist of the other, but with two younger poets personally strange to both :

'We, who marked how fell  
Young Adonais, sick of vain endeavour

Lark-like to live on high in tower of song ;  
And looked still deeper in each other's eyes  
At every flash of Shelley's dazzling spirit.'

So wrote Thomas Lovell Beddoes. Yet Beddoes was too affluent for complete discipleship to either. He was, perhaps, chiefly fascinated by Shelley, and often recalls him in the swift and subtle music of his lyrics, and in his love of grim and spectral imagery. But his imagination was rather allied to that of Keats by its intense feeling for the concrete, the sensuous ; and he has domains of his own to which both Keats and Shelley were strange. At the Charterhouse and at Oxford he had steeped himself in Webster and Tourneur ; in Germany (from 1825) he drank deep of Tieck, and learned to admire the 'great and varied merits' of Goethe in days when Carlyle was interpreting *Meister* to an imperfectly comprehending audience. The *Iphigenie* he calls 'a poem faultlessly delightful.' But he admired Goethe across a gulf of dislike, and Tieck, his favourite, if not his next of kin, among the foreign Romantics, had penetrated less deeply than himself the more recondite recesses of Romantic fancy and Romantic laughter. For Beddoes exhibits certain qualities of Romanticism in an unparalleled degree. The material fact does not dissolve in his hands, as in Shelley's, but it becomes the nucleus of rich, fantastic, often eerie suggestion, the key to an unseen universe of strange forms of mingled horror and beauty. He makes us see a floating ship with the eyes of the 'caved Triton' whose azure day it breaks, or of the mermaid whose pearly song bubbles up through the reeds ; flowers with the eyes of the dead who lie 'thinking' beneath the tangled roots. Death is the familiar theme of Beddoes' imagination ; yet no poet deals less in mere horror. He sports and mocks among the grim creatures of his fancy, like his own revelling ghosts who

'dance and are merry, for Death's a droll fellow.' *Death's Jest-Book* was the characteristic title—announced with huge delight to a correspondent—of his only finished drama. In a graver mood he can sing, with ineffable sweetness, of the joy of dying :

'Wilt thou cure thy heart  
Of love and all its smart,  
Then die, dear, die :  
'Tis deeper, sweeter,  
Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming,  
With folded eye.'

There was a pathetic fitness in the death by his own hand of this persistent haunter of the tomb. Beddoes, like Darley and Procter and most of the younger Shelleyan group, and like Browning, the great continuer of Shelley in the next generation, attempted drama with the equipment of a writer of dramatic lyrics. Whatever in a drama is more than the dramatic lyric—construction, evolution of character, plot—is here of inferior worth ; but both the *Death's Jest Book* (finished in its earliest form, 1826) and the immature *Bride's Tragedy* (1822), are strewn with lyrics of exquisite and quite individual quality—blending in some sort the manner of the Elizabethan and the Shelleyan lyric—yet adding a note of weird gaiety and fantastic subtlety which belongs to Beddoes alone. As a letter-writer too, he holds a distinguished place even in the age of Shelley and Byron. His letters combine some of the most individual qualities of theirs. Picturesque, rapid, spontaneous, versatile, they bring the poet and the man of the world, the rapturous and the caustic observer, into juxtaposition with a sharpness of dissonance only to be paralleled in Heine.

A similar blending of Shelleyan and Elizabethan inspiration meets us in the work of Charles Jeremiah Wells and



Thomas Wade. An early associate of Keats, Wells' first book, *Stories after Nature* (1822) bore, like the *Isabella* and Reynolds' *Garden of Florence*, the mark of Boccaccio. But the fame which found C. J. Wells (1800-1879). him out at seventy-five—fame even now strictly confined within the limits of the literary world—rests almost wholly upon his remarkable dramatic poem *Joseph and his Brethren*. Originally published under a feigned name in 1823, it was revived, through the urgency of Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne, after being largely re-written, in 1876. The re-writing went on as long as Wells lived, and his final version still awaits publication. In its present form the imaginative quality of the poem is beyond question. The blank verse is of Marlowe's school, and it has his hurried monotony, his peremptory and defiant splendour. The story of Potiphar's wife, too, presented a wonderful and almost unused opportunity for the Marlowesque Titanism of passion. Phraxanor is in truth an extraordinary creation,—a female Tamburlaine, whose love is a scourge and her speech a flame, lurid with passion but opening out continually into strange vistas of imaginative light. Here is a glimpse from her wild appeal to Joseph :

' Darkness never yet did dull  
 The splendour of love's palpitating light.  
 At love's slight curtains, that are made of sighs,  
 Though e'er so dark, silence is seen to stand  
 Like to a flower closèd in the night ;  
 Or like a lovely image drooping down  
 With its fair head aslant and finger rais'd,  
 And mutely on its shoulder slumbering . . .  
 All outward thought, all common circumstance,  
 Are buried in the dimple of his smile :  
 And the great city like a vision sails  
 From out the closing doors of his hush'd mind.'

Thomas Wade, after publishing, in 1825, a volume of verse, partly dramatic, partly narrative, came forward with a poetic drama, *Woman's Love, or the Triumph of Patience*, on the story of Griselda, which was performed with success at Covent Garden in 1828. His dramatic career ended two years later with the powerful Marlowesque *Jew of Arragon*, which was 'howled off the stage.' His strength is still better seen in the volume of lyrics, *Mundi et Cordis Carmina*, issued in 1835. It contains a number of sonnets which imitate the free structure of the Shakespearean sonnet, and recall at times its high romantic ardour. The descriptive pieces show an imagination Shelleyan, at moments, in its union of delicacy and grandeur.

Among the first to welcome Beddoes' *Bride's Tragedy* was George Darley, whose own talent, though far inferior in originality, was in some points akin to his. Born in Dublin, he came to London about 1822, and contributed tales and criticisms to the *London Magazine* in its palmiest days. His literary reputation rests chiefly upon his *Sylvia, or the May Queen* (1827), a lyrical drama which, in spite of serious blemishes, is the least unsuccessful effort of English Romanticism to revive in poetry the Shakespearean fairy world, so finely rendered a few years later in painting and music by Noel Paton and Mendelssohn. In style it is less allied to the *Midsummer Night's Dream* than to *The Faithful Shepherdess* of Fletcher, a dramatist with whom Darley's name is further linked by the useful edition and memoir which he issued in 1840. Darley was one of the best song-writers of his generation, in a vein which retains the fluent sweetness of his countryman Moore, refined and enriched in the school of the seventeenth century and of Shelley.

One of the two friends who shared with Beddoes the cost

of Shelley's posthumous volume was a man older than either —Bryan Waller Procter—'Barry Cornwall.'

B. W. Procter (1787-1874). Procter first became known through his *Dramatic Scenes* (1819), *Marcian Colonna* (1820), and a tragedy, *Mirandola*, performed with *éclat* at Covent Garden, 1821. But his reputation rests rather on his lyrics, collected as *English Songs* in 1832. No poet of our period bears a clearer mark of the *ἐπιγρονος* than Procter. His songs are admirable exercises on well-chosen themes—songs of sea or wine, with a suggestion of Shelleyan rhythm in their stirring and resonant music; but not deeply inspired. He sang other people's emotions with great skill. Yet the dramatic talent this implied was unequal to large flights. His 'Scenes' are somewhat tame, and the tragedy owed its success in great part to its powerful subject—the marriage by a father of his son's betrothed. It contains some striking situations, but Procter failed in passion. His blank verse is fluent, but undistinguished. He was a friend of Lamb and Beddoes, of Browning and of Mr. Swinburne; three generations of English poetry were thus bound together by a very genial personality.

It was not, however, in the liquid notes of Procter that the rich music of the age of Wordsworth died away, and it is not with him that we will take leave of it. Another veteran remains, deep-mouthed, Olympian, better qualified to sustain the ardours of inspired song.

Walter Savage Landor was a scholar before he went to school, a Republican before the Revolution.

W. S. Landor (1775-1864). There was much of the man in him from the beginning, and a good deal of the boy to the end. At Rugby and at Oxford he wrote brilliant verses, and defied authority. He was rusticated from Oxford, and shortly after produced his first volume of poems (1795). Rejecting all suggestions of a profes-

sion, he retired into the wilds of South Wales, and lived for three years in studious seclusion ('one servant and a chest of books'), tempered by fitting passages of love, and by one lasting friendship. The love survives in the many charming verses addressed to 'Ianthe;' the friendship in the brief haunting lines to the memory of Rose Aylmer, and, less directly, in the poem of *Gebir*, of which a book lent by her supplied the source.

It was a fantastic oriental tale, material reluctant enough to Hellenic art. Yet he found in it a certain shadowy grandeur not without affinity to the mythic world of his idols in poetry, Pindar and Milton. The story which he contrived out of it moves, with a close-welded march like theirs, through vague regions of the prehistoric. A prince, the mythical founder of Gibraltar, invades Egypt, falls in love with the queen, Charoba, builds a town which is destroyed by magic, wrestles with a sea-nymph, visits the under-world, and perishes in a poisoned shirt. It is easy to recognize in this elements of Greek and Roman legend—of the stories of Æneas and Hercules. But the incidents were of little importance to him, except as the material basis of style. And of style he had formed, under the spell of Milton and Pindar, a very definite ideal. 'If I could resemble Pindar in nothing else, I was resolved to be as compendious and exclusive.' Such an ideal was, perhaps, perilous for one whose natural bias lay so entirely in this direction. It rendered his narrative abrupt and difficult, and threw his audacities of invention into relief by cutting away the explanatory and harmonizing transitions. Yet the deliberate pursuit of a style severely pruned and purged of all redundance was salutary and notable. Since Gray it had passed out of English poetry; and the tendencies of the new poets of Landor's own generation

*Gebir*  
(1798).

were altogether opposed to it. Southey, with his exuberant learning, Scott, with his generous and facile abundance, ignored reserve as a poetic principle. Wordsworth admitted it only where it was forced upon him, in the 'sonnet's narrow room'; and he paid the penalty in the naïve glee with which he poured forth the interminable stanzas of *Peter Bell* and *The Idiot Boy*.

It is characteristic of Landor that he is great in detail rather than in mass; and *Gebir*, though hardly a great poem, is full of the symptoms of greatness. In later years it captivated Shelley, who delighted to recite it. Milton and Shelley seem to blend in such lines as

'The waves  
Of sulphur bellow thro' the deep abyss;'

or,

'Like a blue bubble floating in the bay' [of Ithaca];

or the 'green and ruined cistern' (ii. p. 497).

But Landor was at bottom separated from Shelley by the demand for clear and definite outline, which was part of his classic art. The impalpable and ethereal painting of Shelley was quite foreign to him. Shelley's pictures are third-period Turners, Landor's are mosaics.

*Gebir*, published in 1798, was read chiefly by Southey and De Quincey. Two other thin volumes were issued in 1802 and 1804. The first contained *Chrysaor*, the second *Gunlaug and Helga*. The latter is an experiment with Norse legend, for which Landor's classic manner in some degree disqualified him; and it is surpassed in imaginative apprehension of Norse poetry by the very first English essays in that field, the Eddic pieces of Gray. The heroic subject of *Chrysaor*, on the other hand, is wholly in keeping with his art. Left sole survivor after the ruin of the Titans, Chrysaor, 'wielder of the golden sword,' once more defies the

gods, and is crushed by the intervention of Neptune. Like most of Landor's verse it is unequal; but the coming of Neptune, the passing away of Chrysaor, and the brief record of the first overthrow of the Titans,—

‘ The sire  
Of mortals and immortals waved his arm  
Around, and all below was wild dismay :  
Again, ’twas agony : again, ’twas peace, ’—

are in Landor's grandest manner.

The *Chrysaor* was the first of a series of poems built upon Greek *motifs*, which embrace almost the whole of Landor's long literary life. Many of them were written in Latin, and published as the *Idyllia Heroica* first in 1814, then, with additions, in 1825. Twenty-two years later he rendered the Latin pieces into English blank verse, and published this, again with the addition of hitherto unpublished English work, as the *Hellenics* (1847). They cover a fairly wide range—from playful love-passages carved in cameo, like *Damoetas and Ida* or *Alciphron and Leucippe*, to scenes like the *Iphigenia* and the *Helen and Menelaos*, which might be taken for lost fragments of Greek tragedy, were they not touched with a certain modern tenderness for childhood and womanhood. The first of the two, and the *Death of Artemidora*, the finest of all, are consummate examples of Landor's way of working by the methods of sculpture rather than poetry; the agony of Agamemnon is silent, that of Elpenor is brought home, not by his words but by their effect:

‘ At that word, that sad word, *joy*,  
Faithful and fond her bosom heav'd once more ;  
Her head fell back : and now a loud deep sob  
Swell'd thro' the darken'd chamber ; ’twas not hers.

In others we have touches of Landor's rougher vein,—

bursts of sardonic laughter at the expense of mobs and monarchs, as when he tells of Erigone's drove of

' Full fifty slant-browed kingly-hearted swine,  
Reluctant ever to be led aright,'

or of Hyperbion, Apollo's chosen poet, who, misunderstanding the god's directions, hangs up his profane adversary. The quondam flayer of Marsyas points out the error but condones the fault :

' My meaning was that thou shouldst hold him up  
In the high places of thy mind, and show  
Thyself the greater by enduring him. . . .  
Be of good cheer, Hyperbion. . . .  
The greatest harm is that, by hauling him,  
Thou hast chafed sorely, sorely, that old pine.'

Almost all Landor's remaining verse was what is called 'occasional.' Most of it was produced during the long residence in Italy which occupied his later maturity. But the stream flowed to the end, and suffered no palpable loss of lucidity or power. And it is among the brief stanzas that his most perfect work is to be found. As the Hellenics are the nearest English analogues of the Theocritean idylls, so in these he has given us the only worthy counterpart of the Anthology. Almost alone among English poets, Landor was a master of 'epigram,' in the nobler Greek sense. The best of these little pieces are of an incomparable charm. There are no rhapsodies and ecstasies. The tone is low and quiet. Yet these marble contours are eloquent of passion; and his hyperboles of thought are advanced with a calm assurance far more telling than rhetorical emphasis, as in the famous lines on Dirce :

' Stand close around, ye Stygian set,  
With Dirce in one boat convey'd,  
Or Charon, seeing, may forget  
That he is old, and she a shade.'

The still more famous *Rose Aylmer* elegy, which Lamb was never weary of repeating, has an even less obtrusive distinction; and a distinguished German critic (Elze) who some years ago proposed to alter '*A night of memories and sighs*' into '*a life*,' as more adequate to the occasion, showed more insight into elegiac etiquette than into the genius of Landor. Nothing can be less like the conventional elegy or the conventional birthday ode than those of Landor, which from first to last unite a freshness, never crude, with a mellowness which never grows dry or hard. Hardly below his pathetic reminiscences of old friends, are the stately contemplations of his own passing away—'The leaves are falling: so am I,'—'I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.' Even his playful verses to his children, or to a pet dog, often have that Landorian felicity of abrupt and moving transition, a sudden note of grave pathos in the midst of their pleasant flow. 'What shall I bring you?' he asks of his 'little household gods;' would you like

'Urn, image, glass, red, yellow, blue;  
Stricken by Time, who soon must strike  
As deep the heart that beats for you.'

Landor's dramas are of more fluctuating quality. The best of them are those which deal with men of heroic fiery temper like his own. His *Count Julian* (1812) is the finest of the three nearly contemporary poems which dealt with the old Spanish legend. Southey acknowledged it with generous rapture:—'No drama to which it can be compared has ever yet been written, and none ever will be, except it be by the same hand.' *Julian* is a Spanish *Coriolanus*, allied with the enemies of his country to avenge personal wrongs upon his king. He sees Roderick at his feet, struggles between passion for his country and the imperious Spanish



instinct of vengeance, then pitifully releases his fallen foe, and surrenders himself to the reluctant dagger of his Arab allies. Such a situation appealed powerfully to Landor, to whom mankind was 'criminal mostly for enduring crimes.' The story was too complex for his severe manner, and misses both effect and lucidity from sheer economy of expression; but there are magnificent passages. A quarter of a century intervened before his powerful but intermittent and difficult dramatic impulse provided *Count Julian* with its only direct successors,—the 'trilogy' on the story of Giovanna of Naples (1839), and *The Siege of Ancona*; the last, involved as it is in structure, a noble and stirring piece of 'heroic' tragedy. Some of the slighter dramatic scenes contain powerful strokes.

But Landor's most lasting work was done in the intervening period, that of his first Italian residence (1814-1837). A disastrous experiment in landed proprietorship at Llanthony Abbey made flight expedient, and Landor, like his own Julian, turned his back indignantly upon his country, settling, after some vicissitudes, in the beautiful Fiesolan villa still shown as his. Here, after some experimenting, he hit upon the form of prose dialogue of which he was to become the supreme, the unique, English master. The 'Imaginary Conversation' belongs as absolutely to Landor as does the imaginary monologue to Browning. Neither in verse nor in drama could Landor's boundless wealth of mind freely pour itself out. His fastidious taste impelled him, when he wrote verse, to a severe compliance with the normal scheme of rhythm incompatible with the rich and ample evolutions in which his thought laid itself out when he wrote in prose. And for one who was neither a recluse nor a man of affairs, but an eager and meditative onlooker, who sat fastidiously a little apart from the world yet responded with passion to

its agitations, dialogue was the natural vehicle. Landor's retreat at Fiesole—overlooking the city, yet not of it—symbolized his relations to men at large. His horizon embraces the whole civilized world and all history. China, Russia, America, France, ancient and modern Greece, and Italy, Humanist France, the England of John of Gaunt and the England of Canning, are called before us with persuasive vivacity. It is true that his personages one and all converse in Landorian periods and with Landorian choiceness of phrase; for his immense fecundity of expression works within the limits of a by no means flexible style. But nowhere, perhaps, out of Shakespeare, is a manner so strongly marked, so unmistakable, made the vehicle of dramatic portraiture so illusive. This is equally true of both the classes into which the conversations have been divided, the 'dramatic' and the 'discursive.' The first are usually brief. They present, not the great crises of action, but some momentary pause in the midst of such crises, with the trampling of multitudes or the drip of blood behind the scene; the interval between the sentence and the scaffold, or between the crime and its discovery; when nothing more remains to be resolved, but only to be endured. It is thus that Lady Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt discourse before their execution; the Empress Catharine and Princess Dashkof, after the murder of the Czar; Hannibal and Marcellus as Marcellus awaits death; Henry and Anne Boleyn before her execution; John of Gaunt and the 'Maid of Kent' as they listen to the London mob surging against the palace doors. Landor's inclination to the statuesque in art leads him to choose these moments of tense passion-fraught repose. Kotzebue's fate is already sealed when his discussion with Sandt begins; Wallace is doomed before he defies Edward; Hofer before he appeals to Metternich. No one paints the inflexible hero with more vigour than

Landor; his *instans tyrannus*, on the other hand, is usually too good an argument against tyranny to be dramatically plausible. So great a king as Edward is allowed such touches of Herod's vein as, 'Sirrah! where I am, mark me, there is but one great man.' The Emperor Francis unfolds his base motives with naïve candour. Landor's animosity against kings had, however, other roots than his hatred of oppression. It was part of his contempt for all officialdom, for all idle ceremonial and pompous routine. Hence his satiric pictures of rulers include constitutional monarchs and constitutional ministers—a Pitt, for instance, or a Canning—and shade off into the fops of philosophy and learning—a Seneca, a Scaliger, a Plato. And here we pass insensibly over to the second division of 'discursive' Dialogues. The tumult of history falls into the background; we listen not to hurried debate, but to leisurely converse in quiet libraries and shady gardens. All the three just named are brilliant studies, the first substantially just, the last grotesquely unhistorical but full of rich imagination. Landor, in whose own nature the finest flower of Epicurean hedonism and Stoic virtue were blended, falls fiercely upon the worldly-minded magnate of Stoicism, and riddles his pretensions through the caustic lips of the slave Epictetus. His Montaigne, Epictetus, Diogenes, are all examples of the nobly natural man as Landor understood him; of the simplicity which is finely bred and well-instructed, the Attic grace which is refined but not effeminate. Montaigne was a great favourite; he delighted in that familiarity of his which is never vulgar, the learning which is never crabbed, the 'divine chit-chat' stored with good things. Landor's own manner was more severe; but his good things and his learning fall from him not less unannounced; he was too fine a humanist to tolerate pedantry. This side of Landor is still further illustrated by his delight in Boccaccio, 'the greatest genius

of Italy, or the continent,' and in Burns. He thought he could have drunk healths with Burns, water drinker as he was, till each asked whether there was a handrail to the stairs. It was one of the fascinations of his villa on the Faesulan hill, that its grounds contained the garden of the *Decamerone*. And his view of Dante is more than a little coloured by that of Dante's genial but worldly-minded commentator. The dialogue in which Dante bids farewell to Beatrice reduces the *Vita Nuova* to very common terms indeed. Its mysticism was too foreign to his temperament to interest his imagination, and in this region lies his most striking limitation as an imaginative portrayer of men. It is even more glaring in the otherwise very fine dialogue of Plato with Diogenes. He found in Plato not only fantastic metaphysics, but servile politics, abhorrent to his positive and republican instincts, and a 'loose tongue, twinkling and glittering like a serpent's in the midst of luxuriance and rankness.' Indifferent as he was to Plato's matter, he naturally saw only wanton redundancy in the harmonious richness of his speech. But if he spoils Plato, Landor may be allowed to have created Epicurus. This noble dialogue—his own favourite of them all—is, with Pater's *Marius*, the finest monument in modern literature to the unepicurean Epicurus of history. The choice and tempered way of life, the culture of all beautiful things, the delight in flowers, and in the friendship of youth and grace, the withdrawal from the insoluble mysteries of life, all these things Landor shared with Epicurus. Even the pleasant garden on the Attic hill overlooking Athens, which Epicurus paces with Leontion and Ternissa, he describes in the image of his own Faesulan retreat. With all its richness of thought, there is no trace of the logical evolution which underlies and controls the intellectual exuberance of Plato. The conversation winds from topic to topic, strewing each with

noble oracular reflections, but building these marble blocks into no soaring edifice of thought. 'The intellectual world, like the physical,' he characteristically says, 'is inapplicable to profit, and incapable of cultivation a little below the surface.' The remark is significant of his style. His sentences are of monumental completeness and detachment; they have that air of finality which in its lowest form belongs to the epigram.

Among these dialogues of discourse is an important group devoted mainly to *literary criticism*. One of these, the first dialogue between Porson and Southey, upon the merits of Wordsworth, with special reference to the *Laodamia*, was among the earliest, and appeared separately in a monthly review. Landor was one of the many critics of his time who understood the Wordsworth of the Sonnets, but not the Wordsworth of *Tintern Abbey*. But the lines on Toussaint stirred him like a trumpet. And the *Laodamia* was itself a stately 'Imaginary Conversation,' more ethereal in conception, but not more poetic in intrinsic texture than his own. Unfortunately this act of critical homage was followed, after a visit to England, in which Landor made Wordsworth's acquaintance, by a second 'conversation,' in which the many sins of the poet against literary art are branded with futile scorn by the most consummate literary artist of his time. Even in *Laodamia* Porson is made to discover many new blemishes. Landor himself discusses Milton with Southey, and in the rambling but amusing discourse with a Florentine and an English visitor, delivers some remarkable judgments on Keats, Shelley, and Byron.

The *Imaginary Conversations* were followed (1834-37) by three works which are, in fact, only imaginary conversations of more elaborate structure and with some development of story. In the *Examination of Shakespeare*, the *Pentameron*, and

Later  
Dialogues.

*Pericles and Aspasia*, Landor dwelt successively upon the three moments of the world's history which had for him perennial charms.

The *Examination of Shakespeare* is the least successful, partly because Landor, with all his reverence for Shakespeare, was in the ways of his imagination far less an Elizabethan than a Greek; partly because the subject offered few opportunities for his great qualities, and many for a satiric jocularly in which he is only fitfully and insecurely excellent.

The *Pentameron*, the choicest of all the discursive dialogues, is a monument not so much to Dante—whom Petrarca and Boccaccio discuss through five days of scholarly seclusion—as to Boccaccio, the great master whose equal ‘in the vivacity and versatility of imagination the world never saw, until the sunrise of our Shakespeare.’ Dante’s greatness indeed filled him with awe, and his sufferings with sympathy; but he was too keen a humanist not to be restive at the mystic philosophy, the want of epic action, the want of ‘manners,’ of geniality,—at everything, in short, which distinguishes Dante from Homer. The conversations of the *Pentameron* itself are models of the fine and dignified courtesy which was Landor’s natural mode of speech; and as the two old scholars converse we catch glimpses, not less charming, of a more evanescent kind of beauty, the daily goings on of an Italian villa, humorous by-play of man and maid, fresh awakenings and afternoon siestas; with sacred moments, in which Laura and Fiametta are quietly remembered by their poets.

*Pericles and Aspasia* is more ambitious in construction than the *Pentameron*, more brilliant in movement, invention, in character-drawing, but less natural and easy. The subject was a magnificent one, and awaited its Landor. Landor’s *Pericles* falls nothing short of the

Pericles of history in sustained force, dignity and wealth of intellect; his relation with Aspasia becomes in Landor's hands an ideal 'marriage of true minds.' Aspasia is one of Landor's most striking creations; born to be the companion of Pericles, we follow her from the first casual meeting in the theatre at Athens to the farewell letter written from his death-bed. The slighter sketches of Cleone, of Alcibiades, of Anaxagoras, of Socrates, of the jealous Xeniaes, 'whom I loved a little in my childhood and (do not look serious now, my dearest Pericles) a very little afterwards,' are excellent. These Athenians of Landor's are certainly less like the swarming multitude of the Agora than the noble profiles that move in marble along the frieze of the Parthenon. No one has ever given so imposing a picture of the intellectual life of the *élite* of Athens. And these letters are strewn with some of Landor's most delicate morsels of song. One of them is the *Dirce* already noticed; another, a fine sequel to the *Iphigeneia*—the meeting of father and daughter, after his murder, in the lower world.

Landor was, without disparagement to the supremacy of De Quincey in a single narrow sphere, on the whole the greatest prose-writer of the age of Wordsworth; and, after Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, he was its greatest poet. Some of the most distinctive qualities of the new poetry he did not share. Of the elemental faculty which in Wordsworth and Shelley transfigures the visible world, he had hardly a trace. His imagination, of extraordinary vigour in its sphere, neither soared into the empyrean, nor brooded over the dim recesses of human nature, nor scooped out worlds of undreamed-of beauty from phantasms, or from the faded woof of old romance. His region was man; but it was neither the abstract Man of Shelley, nor the simplified and, as it were, sifted Man of Wordsworth; as little was it the hetero-

geneous and motley throng that Scott's vast sympathetic imagination gathered in from the tavern and the castle, the hovel and the throne: it was the procession of the distinguished and significant souls of all nations and times, the expressive types or articulate exponents of the energies of the civilized world.

Comparatively isolated as Landor was, however, it was in the direction of his lonely outpost that the area of poetical sensibility was, during the age of Wordsworth, being slowly enlarged. And the poetry of the next generation, of which Landor witnessed the entire compass, was a continuous effort to gather in the harvest of this wider area,—to give imaginative expression not only to the elemental emotions of men, Earth's common growth of mirth and tears, but to the complexities of the cultivated intellect, and its infinitely varied modes of impressing its own rhythms upon the dance of plastic circumstance, in art and science, in statecraft and citizenship, in philosophy and religion. Here Landor lived to see, and, with his royal incapacity for envy, to rejoice in seeing, his work continued and surpassed, by one who added to an intellect as ample and fertile as his own the imagination of Shelley; and who, armed with keen psychological insight, and with a divining faith as ardent and illumining as Shelley's in 'the Love whose smile kindles the universe,' wrought the very souls of men into the woof of poetry. The last great survivor of the age of Wordsworth was nearest of kin to the more original of its two great inheritors in poetry, and the torch passes visibly from hand to hand in the symbolical friendship of Landor with Robert Browning.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

NOTE.—In the following tables, the left-hand column contains, (1) the most important English works of literature published in each year, arranged according to the sequence adopted in the present volume; (2) births and deaths. The right-hand column contains a few similar data of contemporary foreign literature, selected for their bearing upon English Romanticism. The dates given are, unless otherwise stated, those of publication, not, as in the text, of composition.

1798. Malthus: *Essay on Population*.  
 Baillie: *Plays on the Passions* (First Series).  
 Wordsworth and Coleridge: *Lyrical Ballads*.  
 Coleridge: *France*.  
 Bloomfield: *Farmer's Boy*.  
 Landor: *Gebir*.  
 T. Hood born.

1799. Godwin: *St. Leon*.  
 M. G. Lewis: *Tales of Terror*.  
 Sheridan: *Pizarro*.  
 Campbell: *Pleasures of Hope*.

1800. Edgeworth: *Castle Rackrent*.  
 Wordsworth and Coleridge: *Lyrical Ballads*, vol. ii., with Wordsworth's *Preface*.

Leopardi born

Schiller: *Wallenstein*.  
 F. Schlegel: *Lucinde*.  
 Schleiermacher: *Reden über die Religion*.  
 Balzac born.

F. W. J. Schelling: *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*.

1800. Coleridge: Translation of  
*Wallenstein.*

Moore: *Anacreon.*

Cowper died.

1801. Cobbett: *Works of Peter  
Porcupine*

Lewis: *Tales of Wonder.*

Lamb: *John Woodvil.*

Scott: *Ballads.*

Southey: *Thalaba.*

Moore: *Poems by Little.*

1802. Cobbett: *Weekly Political  
Register* established.

*Edinburgh Review* estab-  
lished.

Scott: *Minstrelsy of the  
Scottish Border.*

George Colman (the  
Younger): *Poor Gentle-  
man.*

1803. Jane Porter: *Thaddeus  
of Warsaw.*

Campbell: *Poems.*

Heber: *Palestine.*

T. L. Beddoes born.

1804. Godwin: *Fleetwood.*

Mrs. Opie: *Adeline Mow-  
bray.*

1805. W. Roscoe: *Life of  
Leo X.*

Foster: *Essays.*

Scott: *Lay of the Last  
Minstrel.*

Lady Morgan: *The Wild  
Irish Girl.*

Tieck: *Octavian.*

Chateaubriand: *Génie du Chris-  
tianisme.*

Victor Hugo born.

J. P. Richter: *Titan* (completed)

Oehlenschläger: *Aladdin.*

Mérimée born.

Herder died.

J. P. Richter: *Vorschule der  
Aesthetik.*

'George Sand' born.

Arnim and Brentano: *Der  
Knaben Wunderhorn.*

Herder: *Cid.*

Schiller died.

1805. Southey: *Madoc*.  
Cary: Translation of Dante's *Inferno*.
1806. Maria Edgeworth: *Leonora*.  
James Montgomery: *Wanderer of Switzerland*.
1807. Wordsworth: *Poems*.  
Crabbe: *Parish Register*.  
Tannahill: *Songs and Poems*.  
Byron: *Hours of Idleness*.
1808. *Quarterly Review* established.  
Lamb: *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets*.  
Hunt: *The Examiner*.  
Sydney Smith: *Letters of Peter Plymley*.  
Scott: *Marmion*.
1809. Edgeworth: *Tales of Fashionable Life* (First Series.)  
Hannah More: *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*.  
Coleridge: *The Friend*.  
Campbell: *Gertrude of Wyoming*.  
Byron: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.
1810. Southey: *History of Brazil*.  
Jane Porter: *Scottish Chiefs*.  
Crabbe: *The Borough*.
- Hegel: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.
- Mme. de Staël: *Corinne*.  
Fichte: *Reden an die deutsche Nation*.
- Goethe: *Faust*. Part I.
- A. W. Schlegel: *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*.  
Chateaubriand: *Les Martyrs*.

1810. Scott: *Lady of the Lake*.  
Southey: *Curse of Kehama*.
1811. Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*.  
Scott: *Vision of Don Roderick*.  
Creuzer: *Symbolik*.  
B. G. Niebuhr: *Römische Geschichte*.  
Fouqué: *Undine*.  
T. Gautier born.
1812. Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*.  
Crabbe: *Tales in Verse*.  
Scott: *Rokeby*.  
Moore: *Twopenny Post-Bag*.  
Byron: *Childe Harold* (I. and II.).  
Byron: *Curse of Minerva*.  
J. and H. Smith: *Rejected Addresses*.  
Landor: *Count Julian*.  
R. Browning born.  
J. and W. Grimm: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.  
Tieck: *Phantasmus*.
1813. Coleridge: *Remorse* (acted).  
Scott: *Bridal of Triermain*.  
Hogg: *Queen's Wake*.  
J. Montgomery: *The World before the Flood*.  
Byron: *The Giaour*.  
Shelley: *Queen Mab*.  
Arndt: *Lieder für deutsche*.
1814. Edgeworth: *Patronage*.  
Austen: *Mansfield Park*.  
Scott: *Waverley*.  
Wordsworth: *The Excursion*.  
Rogers: *Jacqueline*.  
Southey: *Roderick*.  
Chamisso: *Schlemihl*.  
Körner: *Leier und Schwert*.  
Fichte died.

1815. Scott: *Guy Mannering*.  
 Wordsworth: *White Doe  
 of Rylstone*.  
 Wordsworth: *Poems*.  
 Scott: *Lord of the Isles*.  
 Milman: *Fazio*.  
 Byron: *Hebrew Melodies*.

1816. Gifford: Edition of *Ben  
 Jonson*.

Jane Austen: *Emma*.  
 Scott: *Antiquary*.  
 Scott: *Old Mortality*.  
 Peacock: *Headlong Hall*.  
 Maturin: *Bertram*.  
 Coleridge: *Christabel*.  
 Wilson: *City of the  
 Plague*.  
 L. Hunt: *Story of Rimini*.  
 Byron: *Childe Harold  
 (Canto III)*.  
 Byron: *Siege of Corinth*.  
 Shelley: *Alastor*.  
 R. B. Sheridan died.

Hegel: *Logik*

1817. Blackwood's founded.

Ricardo: *Principles of  
 Political Economy*.  
 Hazlitt: *Characters of  
 Shakespeare's Plays*.  
 Coleridge: *Biographia  
 Literaria*.  
 Godwin: *Mandeville*.  
 Mary Shelley: *Franken-  
 stein*.  
 Coleridge: *Zapolya*.  
 Scott: *Harold the Daunt-  
 less*.  
 T. Moore: *Lalla Rookh*.

Mme. de Staël died

1817 Byron: *Manfred*.  
 Hookham Frere: *Monks  
 and Giants*.  
 Keats: *Poems*.  
 J. Austen died.

1818. Hallam: *Europe during  
 the Middle Ages*.  
 W. Mitford: *History of  
 Greece* (completed).  
 Jas. Mill: *History of  
 British India*.  
 Hazlitt: *Lectures on the  
 English Poets*.  
 Jane Austen: *Northanger  
 Abbey*.  
 Jane Austen: *Persuasion*.  
 Scott: *Rob Roy*.  
 Scott: *The Heart of Mid-  
 lothian*.  
 Ferrier: *Marriage*.  
 Moore: *Fudge Family in  
 Paris*.  
 Byron: *Childe Harold  
 (Canto IV.)*.  
 Byron: *Beppo*.  
 Shelley: *Revolt of Islam*.  
 Keats: *Endymion*.  
 M. G. Lewis died.

1819. Lingard: *History of Eng-  
 land* (vols. i.-iii.).  
 Hazlitt: *Lectures on the  
 Comic Writers*.  
 Scott: *Bride of Lammer-  
 moor*.  
 Hope: *Anastasius*.  
 Wordsworth: *Peter Bell*.  
 Crabbe: *Tales of the Hall*.

Grillparzer: *Sappho*.  
 Schopenhauer: *Die Welt als  
 Wille und Vorstellung*.

Goethe: *Westöstlicher Divan*.  
 J. Grimm: *Deutsche Grammatik*.  
 Kotzebue assassinated.

1819. J. Montgomery : *Greenland*.  
 Byron : *Don Juan* (Cantos I. and II.).  
 J. H. Reynolds : *Peter Bell*.  
 Shelley : *Peter Bell the Third*.  
 Shelley : *The Cenci*.
1820. Malthus : *Principles of Political Economy*.  
 Shelley : *Defence of Poetry*.  
 W. Scott : *Ivanhoe*.  
 Maturin : *Melmoth the Wanderer*.  
 Sheridan Knowles : *Virginus*.  
 Wordsworth : *Sonnets on the River Duddon*.  
 Milman : *Fall of Jerusalem*.  
 Shelley : *Prometheus Unbound*.  
 Keats : *Lamia*.  
 Keats : *Odes*.
1821. De Quincey : *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*.  
 Hazlitt : *Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*.  
 W. Scott : *Kenilworth*.  
 Galt : *Annals of the Parish*.  
 Lockhart : *Valerius*.  
 Byron : *Cain*.  
 Byron : *Marino Faliero*.
- Goethe : *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, I.  
 Platen : *Ghazelen*.

1821. Shelley : *Adonais*.  
 Shelley : *Epipsychidion*.  
 Keats died.
1822. Lamb : *Essays of Elia*.  
 Wilson : *Noctes Ambrosi-  
 anae* (begun).  
 Scott : *Fortunes of Nigel*.  
 Peacock : *Maid Marian*.  
 Wordsworth : *Ecclesiasti-  
 cal Sonnets*.  
 Rogers : *Italy*.  
 Milman : *Martyr of An-  
 tioch*.  
 Byron : *Vision of Judg-  
 ment*.  
 Shelley : *Hellas*.  
 Shelley died.
1823. Wilson (Christopher  
 North) : *Trials of Mar-  
 garet Lindsay*.  
 Mary Shelley : *Valperga*.  
 Scott : *Quentin Durward*.  
 Galt : *The Entail*.  
 Hazlitt : *Liber Amoris*.  
 Moore : *Fables for the  
 Holy Alliance*.  
 Byron : *The Island*.  
 Ricardo died.
1824. *Westminster Review* estab-  
 lished.  
 Carlyle : Translation of  
*Wilhelm Meister*.  
 Landor : *Imaginary Con-  
 versations*.  
 Mary Mitford : *Our Vil-  
 lage*.
- Tieck : *Die Verlobung*.  
 Heine : *Gedichte*.  
 Manzoni : *I Promessi Sposi*  
 (completed).  
*Le Globe* first appeared.
- Wilibald Alexis : *Walladmor*  
 (purporting to be 'freely trans-  
 lated from the English of  
 Walter Scott').  
 Hugo : *Han d'Islande*.



1824. W. Scott : *Redgauntlet*.  
 Susan Ferrier : *Inheritance*.  
 Byron : *Deformed Transformed*.  
 Shelley : *Posthumous Poems*.  
 Byron died.  
 Maturin died.

1825. Coleridge : *Aids to Reflection*.  
 Moore : *Memoirs of Sheridan*.  
 Hazlitt : *Spirit of the Age*.  
 W. Scott : *Talisman*.  
 T. C. Croker : *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*.  
 Knowles : *William Tell*.

1826. Scott : *Woodstock*.  
 Horace Smith : *Bramblecye House*.  
 B. Disraeli : *Vivian Grey*.  
 W. Gifford died.  
 R. Heber died

1827. Whately : *Logic*.  
 Hallam : *Constitutional History of England*.  
 Scott : *Life of Napoleon*.  
 Moore : *The Epicurean*.  
 G. Griffin : *Tales of Munster Festivals*.  
 E. L. Bulwer (Lord Lytton) : *Falkland*.  
 E. Elliott : *The Ranter*.  
 J. Montgomery : *Pelican Island*.

- Hugé : *Odes et Ballades, Bug Jargal*.  
 Heine : *Reisebilder*.  
 A. de Vigny : *Cinq Mars*.  
 Hauff : *Lichtenstein*.  
*Nibelungenlied*, ed. Lachmann  
 Heine : *Buch der Lieder*.

1827. Heber: *Hymns for the Church Service of the Year.*

Keble: *Christian Year.*

W. Mitford died.

W. Blake died.

1828. Napier: *History of the Peninsular War* (vol. i.).

Hazlitt: *Life of Napoleon.*

L. Hunt: *Byron and his Contemporaries.*

G. P. R. James: *Richelieu.*

E. Elliott: *Corn-law Rhymes.*

1829. J. Mill: *Analysis of the Human Mind.*

Milman: *History of the Jews.*

W. Scott: *Anne of Geierstein.*

Peacock: *Misfortunes of Elphin.*

1830. Sir C. Lyell: *Principles of Geology* (vol. i.).

Sir J. Mackintosh: *Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy.*

Moore: *Life of Byron.*

Godwin: *Cloudesly.*

M. W. Shelley: *Perkin Warbeck.*

Carleton: *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (First Series).

Felicia Hemans: *Songs of the Affections.*

Hazlitt died.

Hugo: *Cromwell*

Platen: *Der romantische Oedipus.*

F. Schlegel died.

Hugo: *Hernani*

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